True Bird Stories

Olive · Thorne · Miller

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By Olive Thorne Miller.

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TRUE BIRD STORIES FROM MY NOTE-BOOKS

CHEWINK

TRUE BIRD STORIES FROM MY NOTE-BOOKS

BY

OLIVE THORNE MILLER
(Mrs. Harriet (Mann) Miller)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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PREFACE

All the stories in this book are strictly true. Nearly all of them are my own observation, part of them studies of captives in my own Bird Room, and the rest of birds in the field.

A few of the incidents have already been related in my "grown-up" books and in various publications, but most of them are now published for the first time.

OLIVE THORNE MILLER.

Brooklyn, N. Y., 1903.

CONTENTS

IN THE BIRD ROOM

	PAGE
The Bird Room	3
The Goldfinches	6
The Goldfinch's Fright	9
The Bird that would not be Free	12
The Busy Blue Jay	15
The Droll Tanager	22
The Goldfinch's Devotion	26
A Madcap Thrush	30
The Baby Robin	37
The Goldfinch's Fun	45
The Comical Chewink	52
Polly's Pranks	59
Polly's Outing	66
The Golden Goose	73
The Saucy Oriole	80
Antics in the Bird Room	86
Blizzard	88
Three Sparrows that live in a House	97
Doctor Dot	102

BIRDS OUT OF DOORS

My First Bird	111
The Thrushes who lived in the City	115
Barn Swallows in a Frolic	118
How the Dog interfered	123
Upper and Lower Story in the Bird World	126
The Lost Baby	129

How the Crow Baby was punished 133
A Jay's Table Manners 135
Friendly Wild Robins 138
The Droll Mockingbird 142
A Sociable Baby Dove 148
The Ducklings who would not give up . . . 151
Birds and Dolls 154

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Chewink (colored)	*Frontispiece*
Bluebird	12
Blue Jay	18
Baby Robin	42
Baltimore Oriole	82
Cardinal	86
English Sparrow	98
Whip-poor-will	112
Wood Thrush	116

IN THE BIRD ROOM

TRUE BIRD STORIES FROM MY NOTE-BOOKS

THE BIRD ROOM

When I began to be interested in birds, I lived in a city where not many beside English sparrows were to be seen. I wanted to know something about our common birds; moreover, I never looked into a bird store without longing to set every poor little captive free.

So I set up a Bird Room. Every fall, for several years, I went around to the bird stores in New York and Brooklyn, and bought all the stray American birds I could find. The dealers did not make a business of keeping our common birds, and now it is against the law to do so. They usually kept only such birds as canaries, parrots, and other regular cage birds; but occasionally they would have a robin or bluebird or oriole tucked off in a corner, and these birds were the ones I bought. In one store I would find a catbird moping on a high shelf, or in a

dark back room; in another a bluebird scared half to death, and dumb in the midst of squawking parrots and singing canaries.

In this way I collected in my Bird Room eight or ten — usually — of our native birds, and always in pairs when I could get them. I put each one in a big cage, and left the doors open all day; so that they had the freedom of a large room with three big windows and plenty of perches all about.

Then I gave almost the whole of my time to taking care of them, and studying their ways through the winter, and as soon as spring came, and birds began to come back from the south, I took my little captives, — those who were able to fly, and I thought could take care of themselves, — carried them out into the country or a big park, and set them free. Then the next fall I found a new set for my Bird Room, to be liberated again as soon as it was safe.

I took such good care of the birds, gave them so many things they liked, made them so comfortable, and let them have such good easy lives, that almost every one was happy, and perfectly contented to stay with me through the winter, when times are sometimes hard for them out of doors. Then, when they began to get uneasy in the spring, I let them go — as I said.

I have explained thus carefully about my Bird Room because I do not approve of keeping wild birds in cages, and I never had one caught or caged for me, not even for study. Every one I ever kept was set free as soon as it was safe for him.

It is no kindness to set a canary free, nor a bird that is injured, or has been kept for years, and so is unfitted to take care of himself. Canaries are born in cages, of caged parents. They have been taken care of for generations, and have no knowledge how to get food or find shelter. Turning one out into the world is about like turning a two-year-old baby out to get its own living.

The only way to mitigate the hard lot of a canary is to make him so happy that he will not wish to be free. I could tell you many stories of canaries who had escaped, coming back and beating against a window to get into the only home they knew.

THE GOLDFINCHES

The way my Bird Room began was this: a friend gave me a pair of English goldfinches. They were little fellows, not so large as a canary, and brightly dressed, having red and yellow as well as brown and white in their plumage.

I bought a big cage for them, and named them Chip and Chipee, but I found they were not happy together. Chipee seemed to be afraid the good things would not last; so when she had eaten all she could, she would quietly sit down in the seed dish, so that Chip could n't get any.

Then Chip, on his side, did not approve of her antics. She was fond of climbing all over the wires of the cage and hanging head down like a parrot. Chip appeared to think this improper, for he would rush at her and twitch one of her feathers. Then she would scold at him.

Sometimes Chipee did not want to hear Chip sing, and one day there was a droll scene in the cage. They had both had their bath and their breakfast, and Chip settled himself on his favorite perch and began to sing.

I noticed that Chipee, who was on the same perch, moved a little away from him, and puffed out her feathers as if she were going to sleep. Chip noticed it too, and seemed to take it as a slight to his music, for he moved a little nearer to her, fixed his eyes on her, and began again.

She did not stir, and looked sound asleep. Then Chip became furious. He ruffled up his feathers, glared at her, and went up and jerked one of her feathers.

That roused her. She turned her head toward him and opened her mouth at him. Among birds this seems to be what "making a face" is among children. Chip did n't like it anyway, for he dropped to the floor.

In a moment he came back to the perch and began again. He sang a note or two, and then paused. Chipee gave one note which sounded like "Whit!" Chip went on a note or two more and stopped again. She said "Whit" again, a little louder.

Three or four times they did this, and then, as Chip did not stop, she suddenly flew at him with a harsh scold exactly as if she said, "*Will* you stop that noise!"

Chip was surprised and stopped for an instant, but quickly made up his mind that he would sing if he chose. He came close to her, stretched

up till his head was far above hers, and sang as loud as he could, fairly shrieking, and holding out his wings ready to fight any minute, while Chipee scolded at the top of her voice all the time.

Of course I could not let them live together if they were not happy. So I bought a new cage, a small square gilt one, and moved Chip into it. Then both were happy.

Chip soon grew very tame, answering me with a cheery little note or two whenever I spoke to him. In his pretty gilt cage he lived ten or twelve years, most of the time in the midst of bigger cages and bigger birds, always cheerful and happy, and interested in every new bird who came to live with us. And he died peacefully of old age at last.

THE GOLDFINCH'S FRIGHT

Soon after Chipee was settled in the cage by herself, she had a serious fright and fainted away.

It happened in this way. I had gone to bed and the room was dark, when I heard a little squeak that sounded like a mouse. I jumped up and lighted the gas. There was Chip safe, but uneasy, evidently frightened and disturbed. I turned to Chipee and found her all in a heap in one corner of the cage.

While I looked she repeated the squeak I had heard. I ran with the cage to the light, and saw that she had pushed herself halfway through the wires, and could not get out or in. I pried the wires apart and she flew out.

Wildly and blindly she dashed around the room, hitting the furniture and bumping against the wall, while I had to stay by the gas to keep her from flying into that.

At last she fell and I hurried to pick her up. She fluttered a moment, and then her head dropped, and she lay limp and apparently dead

in my hand. I looked at her by the gas and thought she was certainly dead, and I put her on the bottom of her cage, expecting to bury her in the morning.

I had heard that birds sometimes faint as people do; so I laid her carefully on her breast and left her, turned out the gas, and went back to bed. In a few minutes I heard a little flutter, and then the rattle of a perch. I quickly lighted the gas again, and there stood Chipee as pert as ever.

The next morning I made a search to see what had startled her, and found that half her seed was eaten and the shells left in the cup, as she never left them. What creature except a bird would eat canary seed? I could not guess, but I resolved to watch — that is, listen.

That night I did so, and discovered that the thief was a mouse. He would run up the wire-gauze window screen and into the cage between the wires. I hung the cage in another place and set a trap for him with cheese, but this was a mouse with ideas; he scorned cheese, and insisted on birdseed. And the worst of it was, that he always managed to get to that cage, or to keep me awake all night with the noise he made trying.

At last I thought of a plan for the thief. I put

Chipee into Chip's cage with him, which pleased her and made Chip very indignant. When I had seen them both settled for the night, two little feather balls at opposite ends of the highest perch, I arranged to receive the mouse. I took away the seed cups from the empty cage and placed instead a round trap, like a rat trap, with birdseed inside.

This was too much for the mouse. About eleven o'clock I heard a scramble and a rattle of wire, and I jumped up and found my mouse a prisoner. That day Chipee returned to her own cage, and had no more visits from mice.

Chipee was a nervous little thing, however, and not very happy among bigger birds, so I gave her away to a friend who had no other birds, and there she became very tame and lived a long time.

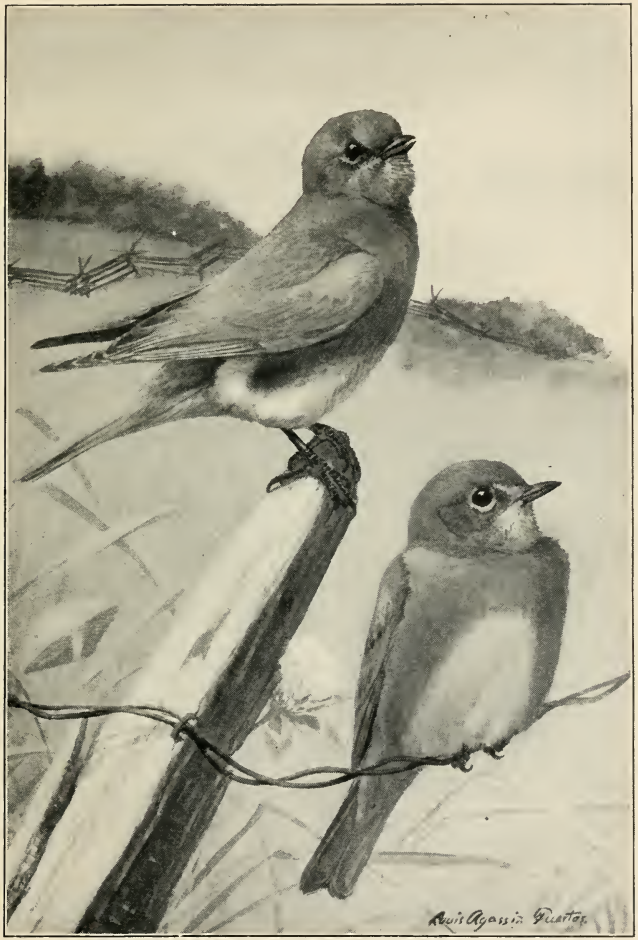
THE BIRD THAT WOULD NOT BE FREE

Most people think that the best thing one can do for a caged bird is to set him at liberty. Almost always this is true; but there are cases, as I have said, in which the bird is happier to live in a house and be cared for.

If a bird is hurt and cannot fly well, he is better off where food and shelter are always provided. Also, if he was taken when very young, before he had been taught to care for himself, he would find it hard to provide for his own comfort. The case of canaries I have already spoken of.

But I want to tell you about a wild bluebird, who knew enough to appreciate the comforts of a home.

The bird was found in a store in a very bad condition, having been caught in a trap and beaten herself against the wires till her wing feathers were broken so that she could not fly. She was put into the cage of another bluebird, who had been so injured that he could never fly.



BLUEBIRD

The stranger showed herself to be rather ill-mannered. She grabbed the best of everything, and drove the owner of the cage about as if it were hers and not his. In fact, she was so greedy that the mistress thought he would be very glad when she had gone. So as soon as she had moulted and had come out with new plumage and perfect wing feathers, the cage door was opened and away flew Madame Blue and disappeared.

Then the bird who was left began to call to her. All day he called, till the mistress was very sorry for him, but there was no sign that the runaway heard.

The next day, twenty-four hours after she had been set free, one of the family found her back, and trying with all her might to squeeze into the cage between the wires, while her old cage mate was greatly excited, calling in the sweetest voice, welcoming her, and encouraging her to come in.

The cage door was opened for her and she flew right in, plainly delighted to get home. Then came the most lively chatting between the two. One could not help feeling that she was telling how uncomfortable she found it having to hunt up food and water, and how much nicer it was to have a whole family of people to wait on and care for one.

She ate and drank, and appeared as if she could not get enough, and was evidently perfectly happy. Open doors were no temptation to her.

Mind! I do not say that all caged birds are happy. Indeed, most of them are not, because few of them are well cared for. By that I mean not only supplied with fresh water and fresh food, with plenty of variety, but talked to, made much of, and loved. A bird can be made so happy and comfortable in a house that he will refuse freedom, but to make him so he must have perfect confidence in, and even love for, the people he lives with.

THE BUSY BLUE JAY

I

One of the most interesting birds who ever lived in my Bird Room was a blue jay named Jakie. He was full of business from morning till night, scarcely ever a moment still.

Poor little fellow! He had been stolen from the nest before he could fly, and reared in a house, long before he was given to me. Of course he could not be set free, for he did not know how to take care of himself.

Jays are very active birds, and being shut up in a room, my blue jay had to find things to do, to keep himself busy. If he had been allowed to grow up out of doors, he would have found plenty to do, planting acorns and nuts, nesting, and bringing up families.

Sometimes the things he did in the house were what we call mischief because they annoy us, such as hammering the woodwork to pieces, tearing bits out of the leaves of books, working holes in chair seats, or pounding a cardboard box to pieces. But how is a poor little bird to know what is mischief?

Many things which Jakie did were very funny. For instance, he made it his business to clear up the room. When he had more food than he could eat at the moment, he did not leave it around, but put it away carefully, — not in the garbage pail, for that was not in the room, but in some safe nook where it did not offend the eye. Sometimes it was behind the tray in his cage, or among the books on the shelf. The places he liked best were about me,— in the fold of a ruffle or the loop of a bow on my dress, and sometimes in the side of my slipper. The very choicest place of all was in my loosely bound hair. That of course I could not allow, and I had to keep very close watch of him for fear I might have a bit of bread or meat thrust among my locks. In his clearing up he always went carefully over the floor, picking up pins or any little thing he could find, and I often dropped burnt matches, buttons, and other small things to give him something to do. These he would pick up and put nicely away.

Pins, Jakie took lengthwise in his beak, and at first I thought he had swallowed them, till I saw him hunt up a proper place to hide them. The place he chose was between the leaves of a book. He would push a pin far in out of sight, and then go after another. A match he always

tried to put in a crack, under the base-board, between the breadths of matting, or under my rockers. He first placed it, and then tried to hammer it in out of sight. He could seldom get it in far enough to suit him, and this worried him. Then he would take it out and try another place.

Once the blue jay found a good match, of the parlor match variety. He put it between the breadths of matting, and then began to pound on it as usual. Pretty soon he hit the unburnt end and it went off with a loud crack, as parlor matches do. Poor Jakie jumped two feet into the air, nearly frightened out of his wits; and I was frightened, too, for I feared he might set the house on fire.

Often when I got up from my chair a shower of the bird's playthings would fall from his various hiding-places about my dress, — nails, matches, shoe-buttons, bread-crumbs, and other things. Then he had to begin his work all over again.

Jakie liked a small ball or a marble. His game was to give it a hard peck and see it roll. If it rolled away from him, he ran after it and pecked again; but sometimes it rolled toward him, and then he bounded into the air as if he thought it would bite. And what was funny, he was

always offended at this conduct of the ball, and went off sulky for a while.

He was a timid little fellow. Wind or storm outside the windows made him wild. He would fly around the room, squawking at the top of his voice; and the horrible tin horns the boys liked to blow at Thanksgiving and Christmas drove him frantic. Once I brought a Christmas tree into the room to please the birds, and all were delighted with it except my poor little blue jay, who was much afraid of it. Think of the sadness of a bird being afraid of a tree!

II

Jakie had decided opinions about people who came into the room to see me, or to see the birds. At some persons he would squawk every moment. Others he saluted with a queer cry like "Ob-ble! ob-ble! ob-ble!" Once when a lady came in with a baby, he fixed his eyes on that infant with a savage look as if he would like to peck it, and jumped back and forth in his cage, panting, but perfectly silent.

Jakie was very devoted to me. He always greeted me with a low, sweet chatter, with wings quivering, and if he were out of the cage he would come on the back of my chair and touch

BLUE JAY

my cheek or lips very gently with his beak, or offer me a bit of food if he had any; and to me alone, when no one else was near, he sang a low, exquisite song. I afterwards heard a similar song sung by a wild blue jay to his mate while she was sitting, and so I knew that my dear little captive had given me his sweetest — his love song.

One of Jakie's amusements was dancing across the back of a tall chair, taking funny little steps, coming down hard, "jouncing" his body, and whistling as loud as he could. He would keep up this funny performance as long as anybody would stand before him and pretend to dance too.

My jay was fond of a sensation. One of his dearest bits of fun was to drive the birds into a panic. This he did by flying furiously around the room, feathers rustling, and squawking as loud as he could. He usually managed to fly just over the head of each bird, and as he came like a catapult, every one flew before him, so that in a minute the room was full of birds flying madly about, trying to get out of his way. This gave him great pleasure.

Wild blue jays, too, like to stir up their neighbors. A friend told me of a small party of blue jays that she saw playing this kind of a joke on

a flock of birds of several kinds, robins, catbirds, thrashers, and others. These birds were gathering the cherries on the top branches of a big cherry-tree. The jays sat quietly on another tree till the cherry-eaters were very busy eating. Then suddenly the mischievous blue rogues would all rise together and fly at them, as my pet did at the birds in the room. It had the same effect on the wild birds; they all flew in a panic. Then the joking jays would return to their tree and wait till their victims forgot their fear and came straggling back to the cherries, when they repeated the fun.

Once a grasshopper got into the Bird Room, probably brought in clinging to some one's dress in the way grasshoppers do. Jakie was in his cage, but he noticed the stranger instantly, and I opened the door for him. He went at once to look at the grasshopper, and when it hopped he was so startled that he hopped too. Then he picked the insect up, but he did not know what to do with it, so he dropped it again. Again the grasshopper jumped directly up, and again the jay did the same. This they did over and over, till every one was tired laughing at them. It looked as if they were trying to see who could jump the highest.

There was another bird in the room, however,

who knew what grasshoppers were good for. He was an orchard oriole, and after looking on awhile, he came down and carried off the hopper to eat. The jay did not like to lose his plaything; he ran after the thief, and stood on the floor giving low cries and looking on while the oriole on a chair was eating the dead grasshopper. When the oriole happened to drop it, Jakie — who had got a new idea what to do with grasshoppers — snatched it up and carried it under a chair and finished it. I could tell many more stories about my bird, but I have told them before in one of my "grown-up" books, so I will not repeat them here.[1]

[1] *In Nesting Time*, p. 173.

THE DROLL TANAGER

One of the drollest sights in bird-land is a scarlet tanager putting on his winter suit.

In summer he is dressed in brilliant scarlet with black trimmings, but when he gets his new suit, as all birds do in late summer, he changes his gay feathers for a modest yellow-olive, such as his mate wears all the year.

I wanted to see how the change was made, so one autumn I was pleased to find a lot of scarlet tanagers in a bird store.

Such a comical-looking party as they were! They looked as if dressed in "crazy patchwork," for their new yellowish feathers come in two or three at a time as the old red ones drop out, and on no two of the birds did they appear in the same way. One had entirely changed except a ring of the old scarlet around the neck; another wore his winter color in dabs and patches all over; a third had dressed his head in the new color while the rest of the plumage was still scarlet.

I bought one who had a broad line of red

down the breast, which met another of the same color over the back. It looked like a red harness on a yellowish bird. He was a queer-looking fellow, and he acted as queer as he looked, for he did not care to eat. He would stand on the edge of his food dish and look at the food without touching it. If he liked the look of it, he would taste it, but if it did not please his critical eye, he simply let it alone.

It would never do to have a bird who did not eat, so when the tanager scorned his bill of fare, I added grated carrot to the mockingbird food, and that he decided to eat. He liked raspberries, too, and when he refused to bathe, I coaxed him to go into the water by putting a raspberry in the dish, where he had to go in to get it.

What the bird wanted was live food, I knew, and I gave him meal worms, which pleased him so much that soon he grew tame enough to come on my desk for them. In fact, though he was shy, he was never afraid of me. He always came when I called him, and at last he told me what he liked best to eat.

Although we may not understand the language of our little fellow creatures (if they have one), we can easily understand their actions, and the way the tanager told me what he wanted to eat was this: I always opened the windows

wide before I let the birds out of their cages in the morning, and one day a fly got into the room. I saw the tanager looking at it eagerly, as if he would like to catch it, so I opened his door. He flew out instantly, went after that fly as a dog will go for a rat, caught it, and ate it with great satisfaction.

I took the hint thus given. I hung some sticky fly-paper outside the kitchen door, where flies hang around, ready to come in if a door is left open. In a short time I had five or six of them caught, and I carried the paper with its buzzing prisoners up to the Bird Room.

The moment I went in holding up my prize, the tanager flew at me, and before I could lay it down, he picked every fly off, hovering like a hummingbird. After that I gave him his regular lunch of flies.

This queer fellow never liked to be looked at; especially he hated to have any one see him eat. When I offered him flies, they were too tempting to be declined, but when he was in his cage and wanted to eat, he would stretch up and look over at me on the other side of the room. If I happened to be looking that way, he would leave the food and sit down on his upper perch as if he had never thought of such a thing as eating.

So I made the tanager a private dining-room, by putting a lining of stiff paper around the corner of his cage where the food dishes were. This made him very happy, and it was funny to see him stretch up between mouthfuls and look over his screen to see if I were looking. If I happened to move, he would flit to the upper perch as if he had been caught in mischief.

THE GOLDFINCH'S DEVOTION

The first I noticed of the little goldfinch's devotion to the tanager was after he had been with me several months, when Chip took a fancy to sitting on the perch that ran out of the tanager's cage.

Before that, the tanager had given up coming out, though his door stood open all the time. Birds who are not very active often do so. Having all their comforts inside the cage, and not caring to fly around, they sometimes have to be coaxed to come out.

The tanager seldom went outside his door, and Chip found his perch a comfortable place where the big birds in the room did not disturb him. After a while he moved his seat just inside the door, and then he was still more quiet, and the tanager did not object.

Unless Chip went too near the tanager on his upper perch, he was never noticed, and before long he made himself at home all over the cage, and took it upon himself to keep other birds out of it. Birds are as fond of calling on one

another as some people, but no matter how big the bird who came to the tanager's door, Chip always met him with scolding and fluttering wings, and drove him away.

As he grew more familiar with the tanager, Chip began to talk to him, a little low chatter, such as he had talked to Chipee, with eyes fixed on his red neighbor.

Chip's fondness for the silent tanager continued to grow, and he wanted to get nearer to him, so he took to clinging to the cage wires outside, as near as he could get. It must have been hard to hold on there, but the little fellow left it only to eat and bathe. When the tanager hopped to the other end of the cage, Chip followed him outside, and when he went to eat, the little goldfinch went too — outside.

Once in a great while the tanager would go out of the cage, and then Chip was most anxious and troubled. He followed from perch to perch, and if he went into another bird's cage, Chip stood at the door and would not let any one come in. If the tanager went to the floor, Chip was very uneasy, leaning far over and watching him, and when he flew up to a perch, giving a joyous call.

In the next cage to the tanager lived a robin, a big, fun-loving fellow, who took it upon himself

to make the shy tanager go out into the room. The way he did it was to jump on the roof of the cage, coming down hard, right over the tanager's head. Of course the tanager hopped across to another perch, and the robin began a mad war dance across the roof, making the tanager fly wildly around till he slipped out at the door.

Chip did not approve of this way of treating his friend, and he set out to make the robin behave better. He flew at the big fellow, half a dozen times as big as himself, but the robin was not a bit scared.

Then I came to the rescue, and fastened a paper over the top of the cage. This usually keeps birds off, but the robin seemed to like it, for it made more noise. He pranced back and forth over it with delight; he lifted the handle of the cage and let it fall with a clatter; he tore off bits of the paper and dropped them into the cage, and was as naughty as he could be. All the while Chip was scolding and flying at him, trying to peck him, and doing his very best to protect his friend.

When spring came, the tanager woke up and showed an interest in things. He began to sing, he took soaking baths, and he spent much time at the window looking out on the trees as they put on their green spring coats.

Now, too, he began to be cross to Chip. He had never seemed to care for his little friend, he had only endured his attentions, but now he was really unkind to him, and poor Chip was very unhappy about it.

I waited only till it was warm enough to be safe to let the tanager out, and then I took him into the country away from English sparrows and set him free. Chip moped a little while, but there was always so much going on in the Bird Room that he soon found something else to interest him.

A MADCAP THRUSH

I

The most amusing bird I ever saw was an English blackbird. One who knows our American thrushes would never look for pranks and "show-off" performances in that dignified family. Yet this madcap was a thrush — the black thrush.

He had not been in the house ten minutes before he began to exhibit his accomplishments. First he looked the new cage over from top to bottom, tried every perch, tasted the food, flirted out a few drops of water, and then settled himself on the middle perch, fixed his eyes upon me, and prepared to sing.

I was charmed with his readiness; I held my breath! Now I should hear the famous English blackbird, whose praise is sung by the poets of Europe. I did. I heard him whistle out, loud and clear — a pure Yankee air!

Down fell my hopes, for if there is one thing I specially dislike, it is a bird trained to whistle like a boy, and I remembered with disgust that

I had promised to entertain the bird all winter while his young master was abroad in search of health. I wondered if I was doomed to listen to that stupid tune for six months. It soon became plain that I was — and worse, for he had forgotten or had never learned the end of the strain, and that lost chord he was forever seeking.

After I got over my first disappointment, I tried to help him out, for he really seemed much concerned about it; but I did not know the air, and he refused all my attempts to make an end to it.

He did not scorn my help. If I began, he would join in and make a duet of it, and if I stopped at the end of a few notes, he would take it up at that point and finish it. If I whistled it wrong to try him, he at once corrected me by repeating it as it should be.

All through the first evening till ten o'clock he sat on that middle perch and whistled his unfinished strain, and not one note of his own song did I hear.

The next day I was treated to a curious sight. The room where I sat at work was separated from his by portières, and he did not see me, though I could look through a crack and see him. Hearing a queer, low song, I peeped at

him, and there he was on the floor of his cage dancing a jig — I don't know what else to call it.

His eyes were fixed on the middle perch, two or three inches above his head, as if he were addressing some one on that spot, and he was jumping and tiptoeing around in the drollest way.

First he hopped back and forth with mincing steps, singing a whispering song all the while, and moving his head from side to side. Then he sprang lightly to the lowest perch, just above the floor, instantly jumped down and scrambled across the floor, and then turned and bounded over the middle perch without touching it, as if he had suddenly gone mad. Such a figure as he was! The feathers on the top of his head stood up like a crest, his mouth was half open, his wings were held a little out, and his tail was spread open like a fan.

While I looked on at this queer performance, he seemed all at once to think of something.

He ran up the three perches to the top, and began his whistle. The show was over for that time.

II

But that was not the end of the thrush's performances. He amused himself every day with similar antics. Sometimes he began by flying

madly back and forth between the two upper perches, with crest raised, tail spread, and wings open, then dropped to the floor and stood before his door, uttering low, strange sounds that I can't describe, looking through the wires as though he saw some one outside to whom he was talking, jerking his head, and wriggling his body in a droll way; and while I looked through the peep-hole, he jumped back to the upper perch and burst out with a loud "Chack! chack! chack!" — a regular blackbird call.

A few minutes later the fit seized him again; and down he went to the floor.

He pretended to snatch something from the gravel and fling it across the cage; then, pointing his beak to a particular spot on the bottom of the cage, he hopped around in a circle, his wings fluttering, his feathers puffed out, and all the time singing the sweetest notes, so low that I could hardly hear them.

With these antics he amused himself every day when he thought he was alone; but one evening, when the family were all out, he deliberately took it upon himself to entertain me. He began whistling his tune, and after two or three notes broke it off and ended with what sounded like talk. Then he took up the air where he had dropped it, and ended in a noise like a laugh.

Again he resumed his air, and interrupted himself with a whistle like a call to a dog. A fourth time he started that whistle, got three or four notes farther, and ended with a sound like a kiss.

I pretended not to notice him, and he went on with the most comical performance I ever heard from a bird; every time beginning the air he had been taught, and bursting into something else. Beside the sounds I have spoken of, he made sometimes a tremolo of the last note, which was really delightful. Again, he gave a droll "Que! que!" then a "Wee-o!" and so on.

All the time the whistled part was loud and clear, and the funny additions were low, as if to himself.

It seemed as if he were trying to recite his lesson, but was so full of fun that he had to indulge in these little asides. It was the oddest and most laughable thing I ever saw. Taken with his serious-looking black coat and his very knowing eyes, it did seem a little uncanny, and as if he knew altogether too much for a bird. In fact, though he looked like a bird, he behaved like a monkey.

A serious trouble in the blackbird's life with me was that I would not let him spatter the wall-paper with the food and water he was always flinging about, as if that were the only use he

had for them. Behind his cage I fastened up a sheet of stiff buff wrapping-paper, and to tear that to bits was the task he set himself. He was a faithful worker, I must admit. First he hammered the paper with his stout yellow beak till he picked a hole in it, and then with the same useful bill he seized the edge, and pulled and tugged till he tore it.

If he could get a piece off, he was happy. He took it into the cage, and visited upon that bit his hatred of the whole sheet. He beat it so rapidly that it sounded like the roll of a small drum; he flung it about, he scraped it on the floor, and never rested till it was reduced to scraps, or dropped out the cage.

When I put his house in order for the day, I always gave him a piece of fresh apple, wedged in between two wires, where I hoped it would stay for him to peck at; but the blackbird had other designs upon the apple. He wanted it to play with. Faithfully he pushed and pulled and twisted till he got the piece out, and then took it down for a mad frolic. He would fling it from side to side, then snatch at it, and instantly spring up on the side of the cage and hold on to the wires, looking scared out of his wits, as if it had bitten him. Then he would go down and worry it again.

Sometimes, lifting one wing, he would pounce upon the bit of apple as if it were a savage enemy that must be destroyed, and in a second bound up on the middle perch as though he expected to be murdered instantly.

Through all these performances he kept up the sweet, low singing. Everything he did was in a jerky way, and I never could guess what would come next.

He appeared to rack his brain to think of new pranks, and if everything else failed, he would dash his gravel out over the carpet. I have even seen him thrust his naughty head between the wires and drop out a beakful of mockingbird food.

After this fashion he "carried on" all winter, and though I did not particularly enjoy him as a bird, as a clown in a cage, an entertainer for a dull hour, he was the funniest I ever saw in feathers.

THE BABY ROBIN

I

Ever since I read somewhere a charming sketch of a tame robin named Bob, all robins have been Bob or Bobby to me, so when a baby of the family came into my Bird Room to spend the winter, his name was all ready for him. Bobby he became from that minute.

That he was a baby I knew partly by his youthful ways, and partly by the fact that he had not entirely put off the spotted bib which marks the infancy of the thrush. He was a knowing youngster, however; he had his own opinions, and never hesitated to speak his mind, though I could not always understand him.

The robin had no notion of losing his interest in life and the world around him because fate had decreed that he should live in a house. On the contrary, he seemed as much interested, and as eager to note the strange things that went on inside our walls, as we are to observe the manners of the foreign folk whose homes we visit.

The doings of the people thus suddenly be-

come his neighbors he studied with curiosity; but one thing in his new world he was already familiar with, and that was the birds. He realized at once that he must make and keep his place among them, and he proceeded to do this the moment he learned how to go in and out of his own particular apartment in that strange, new place.

He had some difficulty at first, because the door to his cage was rather low, — as cage doors are apt to be, — and he stood up so straight that he passed it forty times before he saw that there was a door, and that it was wide open. He had to stoop a little to go out.

The part of the room that the robin at once claimed as his own private promenade was across the tops of two large cages which stood side by side on a shelf, — one being his own, — and he made it part of his daily duty to see that no one trespassed upon it. Woe to the unlucky bluebird or oriole who dared set foot on that sacred spot! Down upon him instantly came Master Bobby with fury in his eye, so big and bustling in manner that no one was brave enough to stay and face him.

No one, did I say? I must except one — a little Baltimore oriole, who was ragged and tailless, but so bold and saucy that I shall tell her story in another paper.

Another duty the robin took upon himself — to assist me in seeing that every bird in the room had his daily outing. Soon after the cage doors were opened in the morning Bobby looked around, and if he saw any of the feathered folk who lingered by the food-cup and did not take advantage of their privilege, he went at once to attend to it.

His manner of effecting this purpose was completely successful. He simply pounced upon the top of a cage, and carried on such pranks over the head of the bird within that he was glad to fly out and leave the cage to the enemy. The robin cared nothing for the cage, however; he merely wanted to drive its tenant out, and the moment that was done he went his way.

It may appear strange that, being a robin and consequently fond of the ground, Bobby did not lay claim to the floor of his new territory. He did desire to do so, but there was a slight difficulty in the way. Another claimant was ahead of him, and one who looked well able to maintain his ground — a blue jay. Against all others in the room the robin did defend the floor, always rushing up to see what was wanted when any bird ventured to alight on the matting.

The blue jay was too big to take liberties with, and he became an object of the greatest inter-

est to the young robin. The jay was himself little more than a baby, who had lived with people from the nest, and was therefore quite used to a house. In fact, he knew no other home, and Bobby watched everything he did with a sort of admiring awe, as we have all seen a little boy watch the performances of a big boy.

II

When the blue jay was hopping about the floor, busy with his own affairs, which were always of the utmost importance, in his opinion, the robin often stood on a low table or chair, and looked at him, following every movement with deep concern. If the jay devoted himself to some particular thing, like hammering a nut, and went to the round of a chair to do it, his admirer came as near as he thought safe, on the floor, and observed the operation closely.

Sometimes, after looking on for a while, the robin, too, hunted about for a plaything, and brought a match, a pin, or a bit of nutshell that he picked up on the floor, and laid it before the jay, as if to challenge him to a frolic. Whatever was his intention, the jay was far too busy a personage to play; his life was full of serious duties, and he never accepted the invitation.

One thing the blue jay persisted in doing that was almost too much for Bobby to endure — that was taking his bath first. The two birds used the same broad, shallow dish on the floor; and when the jay got possession, the robin would dance around in a circle, running and hopping as near as he could without being spattered, quite frantic to go in. But his big rival was specially fond of a good soaking himself, and he often kept Bobby waiting some time.

When at last the way was open, Bobby rushed into the water, stepping upon the edge of the dish with one foot, as a human being would do, and taking his turn at a soak. On coming out he fanned himself nearly dry, hopping about the floor and beating violently sometimes one wing, sometimes both wings.

He had, too, a curious fancy for coming upon a small stand near me to dress his plumage. It was not at all a good place, for there was no perch to cling to while he twisted around to plume himself. But it was his choice, and he insisted on coming there, though when he tried to reach his tail feathers his feet slipped and he turned round and round like a kitten chasing its own tail, making a laughable show of himself.

The robin baby, like others of his age, was fond of play. A favorite game was to run

across the two cages he considered his own, and, at the end, jump heavily on the paper cover of a smaller cage a foot away. Of course the first bounce sent the owner out in a hurry, and then Bobby ran and jumped till he was tired of it.

Another way he had of amusing himself was trying to pull out the ends of strings that hung loose where the matting was joined. One of these was always irresistible to the bird. He seized it in his beak, and pulled and tugged at it so hard that he was often jerked off his feet. The fact that he never got one out did not discourage him in the least; he was always ready to attack another when he found it.

A string was his great delight; he dragged it about, and worried it as he did a worm. It sometimes got him into trouble. On one occasion he found a long piece of thread, and before I noticed him, had so tangled it around one leg and foot that he could not spread his toes, nor, of course, stand on that foot, and he was very much frightened. I could not catch him while he was out in the room without scaring him still more, and he worked at it himself a long time before he went into his cage. As soon as he did that, I caught him and cut off the thread with scissors, though it was so twisted around that I had to cut fifteen or twenty times before it came off.

BABY ROBIN

Bobby showed the common-sense for which his family is noted, by submitting quietly, as soon as he understood that I was trying to help him, and letting that leg hang down, while the other was held up.

A newspaper on the floor always furnished the robin with much entertainment. After jerking it about, and lifting it to peer under the edge, he would pounce into the middle, peck a hole, and then seize the edge of the opening and tear the paper into strips. The tearing sound always startled him and sent him off, — as it does nearly every bird, — but the fun of doing it was so great that he always came back and did it again.

One trouble came into the life of my robin that for weeks made him very unhappy. It was a feather in one wing, of which the feathery part was missing — worn off, apparently. This he plainly considered a disgrace to any robin, — birds are very sensitive about the condition of their plumage, — and he determined to pull it out. He worked at it many hours, but for some reason could not dislodge it; but he did succeed in making himself very miserable about it, and I was glad that spring and the time of his freedom was near.

As that magical season came on Bobby grew restless, and worked off his superfluous energy on

his roommates. He chased the birds about; he made war on a shy tanager; he performed war dances on the cages; he tried to put an end to all quiet life.

In fact, he became so troublesome in my little colony that I was glad, on the first warm day, to take the robin — a baby no longer — out to the country and bid him farewell.

THE GOLDFINCH'S FUN

I

When I introduced to my room the English blackbird, some of whose pranks I have related, there hung on the opposite side of the bay-window a smaller cage, in which lived another foreigner — an English goldfinch.

This bird was quite old, and had almost ceased to sing. He had been for ten years in my house, and had seen forty or fifty feathered folk, of almost as many kinds, come and go. He was nearly as much interested in bird study as I was, and he watched and pondered over every stranger as if he meant to put him in a book.

When I opened the goldfinch's door, as usual, on the morning of the blackbird's arrival, he paid no attention to his beloved bath, but instantly flew over and alighted on the cage of the newcomer.

This did not please the gentleman in black. He stretched far up and saluted his visitor with a decided "Chack!" that the small bird understood, for he flew at once to a perch resting

against the wires of the blackbird's cage, where he could stand three inches from the cage, see every movement of the strangely behaved newcomer, and yet be quite beyond his reach.

There he sat hour after hour, as much interested as if the whole performance were a show for his amusement. He seemed perfectly entranced; he would hardly leave his place for food or water, and for the first time I had trouble to get him into his cage at night.

And no wonder! If ever there was a clown in feathers, the blackbird was one. He took notice of his little observer, of course; he noticed everything, and though he generally preferred to chatter and sing and show off to the people about him, he did occasionally condescend to pay attention to the bird.

Sometimes he scolded him in a loud "Chack! chack! chack!" as if reproving him for his curiosity about his neighbors' affairs. Sometimes the goldfinch would sidle along an inch on the perch, as if he thought the queer black fellow might reach him; but he knew enough about cages to be sure that he was safe three inches away.

Again, the blackbird would come close to the wires on his side, and address his little audience of one in a low, talking tone. The goldfinch

would reply, usually with a gentle scold. Upon this, the blackbird apparently resolved not to notice him. He went to the floor, turned his back, and interested himself in the gravel, or began one of his comical dances.

This proceeding the smaller bird looked upon with the closest attention, drawing nearer till he almost touched the wires. But when, in some of his frisking about, the blackbird approached that side of the cage, the goldfinch dashed away as though he feared his strange neighbor might come through. Then the dancer hopped lightly to the upper perch, spread wide his tail, lifted it with a flourish, and let it fall gracefully back to place, expressing — as I translated it — satisfaction that he had put the starer to flight.

The goldfinch did not stay away long. He was unable to resist the fascinations of his droll neighbor. In a few moments he came back and began a low chatter, which he kept up most of the time. Many of the thrush's antics were for the benefit of this little spectator, as if to make believe that he did n't care if he did stand and stare at him.

Once he had a grand frolic over one of the goldfinch's feathers which happened to fall into the cage, while the owner paused a second to look down on him. He was moulting, and his

feathers dropped easily. The moment it fell the blackbird pounced on it; and the way he "carried on" with it was funny to see, though the little fellow looked rather disturbed, as if he felt that a part of himself was being trifled with.

The blackbird literally wiped the floor with that gay feather; then he danced across the cage sidewise, appearing half afraid of it. Again, he beat it against a perch, flung it into the air and caught it before it fell, and at last tossed it into a corner as if it were unworthy his notice.

Soon after, he began to perform around the end of a perch as though it were a hobgoblin of the most frightful sort, opening his mouth wide, raising and fluttering his wings, swaying his head from side to side, and glaring at it as though he would eat it in half a minute.

II

The one thing that aroused the blackbird to genuine fury was seeing his rival bathe. His own bath was the principal event of the day in his opinion, and he was so violent in his splashings that it was necessary to take him into a room where he could do no injury. He always sprinkled the table and the carpet and furniture for several feet around.

Even when he had just returned from this daily excursion, and was not yet dry from his own soaking, it excited him wildly to see any one else in the water. He dashed around his cage, fluttered his wings as he did in spattering, pecked savagely at the wires, rushed to his water dish, flirted out every drop he could, and finally raised his head feathers like a crest, and looked reproachfully over at me, as if I had treated another better than I had treated him.

All the time he uttered a low cry, a sort of "Seep" with the mouth closed, and turned every other second to see his little neighbor splashing in his gentle way.

That little neighbor, too, took a rather naughty delight in coming close to the blackbird to shake himself, and thus sometimes to throw a drop or two upon him. At this the blackbird shook himself as though a drop of water were poison to him; and then he went to the floor and busied himself with some important matter, as if he did not know there was such a bird in the room.

The goldfinch, as I said, had nearly lost his pretty song, but sometimes he tried to sing a little in his old way. This the blackbird apparently regarded as a direct insult to him. Perhaps he thought it intended for mockery of

him, for as soon as the little fellow began, he struck in with his loudest whistle — his Yankee air. That always silenced the goldfinch, for he could never get used to hearing a bird whistle in so unbirdlike a way.

One curious trick that the blackbird occasionally played off upon his little watcher outside showed a grim sense of humor that was perhaps the most uncanny thing about him. He would crouch on the floor, touching it with his breast, every feather erected, head raised, and eyes glaring; and when one was sure he was about to do something madder than ever before, he would suddenly rise to his feet in the most quiet manner, drop his feathers back in their place, and go on about his business as if he never thought of a prank. Upon this the goldfinch always seemed startled, and uttered a note or two in an inquiring tone.

Then the blackbird turned his attention to the goldfinch, and he always made one think of a savage warrior about to swallow up or totally destroy his enemy. He had a way of wiping his beak on the perch that looked like sharpening it for instant use, and if he had been out, I am sure the little fellow would have been afraid of him.

He scraped his beak violently, then looked over at the bird outside, then glanced at me,

shook himself vigorously, wiped his bill again, and all in a jerky way as if he could hardly contain himself. In a moment he turned his back on the goldfinch, dropped to the floor, and proceeded to attack the middle perch as if it had mortally offended him.

There was one thing, however, that frightened him, and that — strange to say — was a long stick. The father of the family is fond of fishing, and his rods are dear to his heart; but never, so long as the blackbird lived in the house, could he bring one into the room without putting the bird into such a panic that we feared he would beat himself to death against his cage.

This was no show performance, either, although the little goldfinch — who had long ago learned the harmless character of a fishing-rod, to birds at least — looked on with the same interest with which he viewed all the actions of his strange neighbor in black.

When at last his young master returned, and the English blackbird went back to his home, the goldfinch seemed greatly to miss his daily show.

He lost all interest in coming out of his cage, and for several months after he seemed to be waiting and looking for some one to amuse him, as did his strange black visitor of the winter.

THE COMICAL CHEWINK

I

One day when I chanced to drop into a bird store, — for I can never pass one without going in, — I saw a bird that was new to me, and strangely enough the owner could give it no name. "It was some common thing," he said; "a boy brought it in, and though he did n't care for it, he bought it to please the boy; he could put it in his window cage." Then, disgusted to find that I had not come in to spend twenty-five dollars for a loud-singing mocking-bird to drive me crazy in a city house, or fifty dollars for a parrot who would shriek me wild in a week, the man walked off to the back of his den, and left me to look at the stranger as long as I liked.

The bird was bright and attractive, and not at all afraid of me, regarding me with nearly as much curiosity as I regarded him. I longed to take him home and get better acquainted with him. But my room was full. I had no place for another cage, and I had to leave him.

The next June, on the Hoosac Mountains, I was greatly delighted by an exquisite bird-song — a perfect tremolo, like a peal of silver bells. After much search I found the singer — a chewink or towhee bunting. All through nesting time I enjoyed his music. I found his nest, and saw madam his spouse, and their one solitary baby in its cradle in the grass.

After I came back to the city, one day in looking up birds to fill my Bird Room for the winter, I went into the same old bird store. The moment my eyes fell upon the stranger, — still living in the big show cage in the window, — I knew it. It was a female chewink, in her modest dress of brown. Of course I could not hope to hear the tremolo that so stirred me on the mountain, but I could at least learn some chewink ways. I brought her home, gave her a fine large wire room to herself, and shortened her name to "Winks."

The first morning a bird spends in my Bird Room he is most interested in seeing the other birds at their bath. They seldom have a chance to bathe in a crowded store, and the splashing they hear always sets the poor little creatures nearly frantic. Winks was like the rest; no sooner did bathing begin than she came down to the floor of her cage, and looked out sharply

as if she said, "Can it be possible? are they really in the water?"

In a moment she began to shake herself, and to run back and forth, trying to get out. Her wishes were as plain to me as if she asked in so many words to have a bath. I gave her a chance, and she took a good soaking, the first in a year, I suppose, poor thing!

The next day she made up her mind that she preferred to bathe in her water dish, which was about the size of a coffee-cup. It seemed absurd to bathe in a three-inch cup when there was a ten-inch bathtub at her disposal; so I thought I would cure her of that notion by giving her something altogether too small for the purpose, — a glass dish out of a small cage, about an inch in diameter and rather deep.

That did not discourage her in the least; she seemed rather to like it, and though the tub full of water was right before her eyes, she insisted on using only the cup. Her way was very comical. She thrust her head in, and then bent her wings and shook her feathers as if she had been into the water all over. Sometimes she was so eager about it that she fairly threw herself off her feet, and her head would go in out of sight while her tail stood straight up, and her feet for an instant pawed the air wildly. A very droll

figure she made of herself; but it seemed to please her, for it was a long time before she formed the habit of bathing outside.

I said her tail stood up. I should have said the tail coverts, or the short feathers that cover the top of that member, for tail she had none; she was moulting. Much of the expression of a bird depends upon the tail, but Winks managed to perk up those coverts in a manner as saucy as she did the long tail, when it came out.

II

My chewink had some curious ways. In the first place she insisted on sitting on the floor. This did not surprise me, since the chewink is a ground bird, getting its food there, and even making its cozy little nest in a hollow in the grass.

She would bend her long legs and sit perfectly flat on the gravel, an hour at a time. Sometimes she turned her face to the room, so that she could be amused by the panorama of bird life about her; but now and then she hid her head in the back corner of the cage, probably to take a nap, though it looked as if she had turned her back upon a frivolous world and the pranks of blue jays and orioles, for serious meditation.

This, too, was her chosen attitude for a sun bath; and I never saw a bird who could make herself so flat. It is no doubt the way these birds conceal themselves in the great out of doors; and in that attitude they must have been almost invisible on the grass-tufted, pebbly hillsides where I found them living.

A queer freak of my chewink was her determination to get her feet into her food. She had mockingbird food mixed with grated carrot, which many birds toss about, daintily picking out only the bits they like. But Winks wanted to scratch hers, like an old hen; and scratch she did, too, in spite of all I could do.

Her way was funny. It was to jump into the dish with both feet, give one vigorous scratch, and then spring out again, almost before one could see what she did.

This trick, too, I tried to cure, but the bird had a way of doing as she liked. She laughed me to scorn, so to speak. I took away her broad dish and put her food in a small after-dinner coffee-cup, not much wider than her foot was long. Even into this the naughty Winks would jump, give one wild flirt with her feet, and then out, and she would not eat till she had done it. I never could cure her.

It was not because she was dull about learn-

ing. She was very bright about other things; for instance, about learning to use a ladder. One day when I was out something happened, — I don't know what, — but on my return I found in her cage twelve wing feathers. She had either beaten herself against the cage or deliberately pulled them out.

The result was seen the next morning — she could not fly. When she started out on her usual tour of the room, she came plump to the floor.

I brought at once, and put up to the door of her cage, a light ladder which I keep for the use of disabled birds. The moment she saw it she hopped up, round after round, in an experimenting sort of way, to see where they led, until she reached her doorway. Contrary to my intention at this point, she did not go in, but hopped to the top of her open door, and then scrambled to the roof of the cage. There she was as badly off as before; for no bird that is disabled will try to fly downward.

I waited till she grew hungry and uneasy, and yet she would not venture to hop down the short distance. Then I made use of the meal-worm argument. It is the most potent "persuader" I know for birds which eat worms. Taking one of these unpleasant creatures in a pair of printer's tweezers that I keep for the purpose, and being

careful to pick out a lively one, I drop it on the floor of the bird's cage. The main object in life with these wriggling things being to get out of sight, it starts instantly for a hiding-place. The movement attracts the eye of the hungry bird on the roof, and he is at once frantic to seize and stop the escape of his prey. In his eagerness he forgets his fear of falling, and is almost certain to clamber down the side of his cage, and rush in after what he considers a choice morsel.

A comical performance of the chewink was to fly about the cage as if she had gone mad. From perch to perch she went in a wild fashion, using wings as well as legs, and ended up standing on the middle perch, flapping her wings like a crowing cock, and crying, "Chewink! chewink!" as loud as she could call. She never condescended to amuse herself. I think she was old, and had outlived the follies of her youth. She went on her way about the room, paying no attention to any one, and giving a saucy toss of her tail — after it grew out — that seemed to warn all whom it might concern not to meddle with her.

At any rate, no one did interfere; and when the spring fever set in among my birds, the chewink was the first to go her way in the world out of doors, where I hope she is alive and well to-day.

POLLY'S PRANKS

I

Polly was a snowy white cockatoo, with beautiful yellow crest, who lived in a pleasant home in New York. The one object of her life, when I first knew her, was to get out of her cage.

She might have stayed out all the time, for it was a pet-ridden house, and the family was used to all sorts of beast and bird pranks. She might, I say, but for one or two notions which she had. One was an incurable dislike of beads, and another an equally strong liking for buttons.

The beads she attacked as if they were enemies, biting them off a lady's dress much faster than they had been sewed on, and flinging them away with a spiteful jerk that sprinkled the carpet like a shower of glass. No matter what other attractions were in a room, if a lady happened to wear a bit of sparkling bead trimming, the instant Polly was free she flew or waddled across the floor, and went to work at it, and neither coaxing nor scolding had the smallest effect upon her.

With buttons it was otherwise. She seemed to delight in them. To be sure, she bit them off, but it was in the way old Izaak Walton says a fisherman must put a hook through a worm, "as if he loved it." She snapped off the buttons with her scissors-like beak, but she did not throw them away; she chewed them up. If no one happened to notice her, the naughty bird would snatch every button from her mistress's dress, or her master's coat, more quickly than a person could do it with a knife.

Another of this bird's tricks was to attack people's feet, and as she had a beak like a pick-axe, and never hesitated to use it, she was the terror of children and servants.

Children, indeed, she particularly disliked. She squawked at them if she could not get out of her cage, and she flew at them if she could.

These, with other troublesome fancies, condemned Madam Polly to a cage, and, as I said before, to get out of that gilded prison was her sole business in life.

First she would coax, and her way was most droll. She began by saying pathetically, "Poor Polly!" to call attention to her wishes. If any one looked at her, she at once began to bow in the most persuasive and violent manner. If that did not bring deliverance, she wriggled

from side to side, opening and quivering her wings, and almost twisting her neck off in her attempts to be winning, her big, dark eyes all the time eagerly fixed upon the one she hoped would open her door.

If these curious antics had no effect, she squawked savagely, and so loud that conversation could not be heard in the room; but her crowning effort, and one that usually was successful, was a wheedling little song — a most ludicrous performance. It sounded like a child trying to sing in a high key and with the quavering, shaky voice of an old woman. It was the funniest song a bird ever uttered, I am sure, and no one could resist this supreme attempt to please.

If dinner was going on when she came out, she rushed at once for the table, climbed up by the cloth, or the dress of a friend, and proceeded to look over the dishes, make her choice, and help herself. Oatmeal she liked; green corn, too, and a chicken bone to pick; but her special delight was in green peas, which she neatly extracted from their delicate skins, and ate with great daintiness. So strong was this liking that the sight of raw peas set her wild till some were given to her. Then she took a pod deftly in one claw, held it up, and removed the peas one

after another, dropping the cleaned-out skins as she went on.

After eating all she wanted, if she chanced to be in an amiable mood, Polly liked to "show off" to a stranger, and she had a comical way. She climbed up the back of a chair, stood on the top, fixed her eyes on the one she intended to charm by the performance, and, the moment that person looked at her, began.

II

To begin with, Polly jerked herself up to her greatest height, as if a spring had gone off inside her like a Jack-in-the-box, every feather erect, crest standing straight up, and delivered herself of her greatest accomplishment, "Cockatoo Cracker!" with a satisfied air, as if nothing could go beyond that. The next instant she crouched on her perch as low as possible; then bowed many times as fast as she could, as though she were hammering something. She performed the most ridiculous capers, which somehow reminded one of the puppyish gambols of a big, awkward dog. Then, if her door were not opened for all her coaxing and storming, madam proceeded to open it, or at least to try to open it. No wire, no string, no intricacy of knots or device of twisting, could baffle her.

She was very knowing, and her beak and claws — hands, they almost deserve to be called — were as useful as many people's fingers. She would work with the utmost patience at any fastening, cutting string or small wire, till she got the door open. The only thing she could not master was a padlock with the key removed. She could turn the key if it were left in.

When her door was actually locked, and she knew it, her anger was roused ; and she at once expressed her opinion of the world in general, and her master in particular, by first shaking her door until it seemed that the hinges must give way, and then wreaking her vengeance on the seed and water cups. These she shook loose, and then pushed out of their places upon the floor. A wide scattering of seeds or a fine shower of water delighted her, and relieved her mind.

After enduring this annoyance for some time, her master brought other tiny padlocks, one for each dish ; and after that, not only her door, but each dish, was securely locked in when it was necessary to shut her up.

She was not conquered even then. Seed and water could not be locked in, and she could thrust her big beak into her seed cup, and fling the contents halfway across the room. If the

seed was so low in the cup that she could not do that, she gathered a beakful and tossed it out upon the carpet, treating water in the same way, till neither food nor drink was left in her cage.

This seemed to be a great relief to her feelings, as harsh words or deeds are supposed to be with bigger folk. Before she gave up trying to open the padlocks, she would work awhile at the door, then rush madly to her seed cup and fling out a lot of seed, then hurry back to the padlock again.

Polly's last resource when she could not open the door, and seed and water were all gone, was to squawk insultingly at the top of her voice, "Ya! ya! ya!"

Reading aloud was always a trial to the cockatoo, and she generally kept up a low, mocking talk, like the long-drawn-out "Craw! craw! craw!" of a hen as she walks about the poultry yard delivering her opinions to the feathered world around her. If she were not noticed, this talk became sometimes so loud that she had to be put into another room.

This was a dreadful thing, for poor Polly was the greatest coward I ever saw in feathers. Being left alone was her severest punishment, and always prompted her to do the most mischief she could think of.

One day, by some carelessness, the padlock on

her door was not fastened, and Polly had the sitting-room to herself for an hour. On the return of the mistress, she was met at the door by bows and cries of "Poor Polly," and repetitions of everything the bird could say, in the most coaxing manner.

She knew at once that mischief had been done, and one glance was enough. Polly had enjoyed a fine frolic with her work-basket. Such a wreck is not often seen: needles from their papers and pins from their box strewed the carpet; the remains of pearl buttons that she had snipped to bits lay thick as snowflakes over the floor; spools had been nibbled, thread and silk cut into short lengths and scattered about; a gold thimble dented past using in her efforts to bite it; and the delicate basket itself pulled apart and broken.

It looked as if a cyclone had struck that work-basket, and Polly was almost too happy to stay inside her feathers, but it was her last prank in the parlor. Her padlocks were never again forgotten.

POLLY'S OUTING

I

FULL of naughtiness as she was, Polly, the cockatoo, was very dear to the hearts of the family, and, like Mary's lamb, —

> Everywhere the mistress went
> The bird was sure to go.

So one June she traveled out on Long Island for her summer outing. This was great fun for Madam Polly, for she was out of doors most of the time. It was thought that she could do no harm in the country, but the cockatoo had a keen scent for mischief. She had not been there a day before she showed what she could do in that line.

Her cage was hung against the trunk of a cherry-tree, which was covered thickly with small green balls that the people hoped would become cherries in time; but Polly had other plans, and took it upon herself to attend to those absurd cherries.

The first thing she did when her door was opened was to seize a low-hanging branch and climb into the cherry-tree. Soon she was out of

sight among the leaves, and then began a gentle but continuous shower, first of leaves and small twigs, which she bit off and dropped, and then of the cherries — to be.

Commands and scoldings were useless. She was among the top branches and could not be reached, and she picked leaves and fruit till she was tired of the sport; then she turned her attention to the bark, and actually girdled one branch before she was caught at it and forced to come down.

The next day she started for new fields. By way of the cherry-tree ladder she climbed, as Jack did his beanstalk, to the roof of the piazza, and then ran its whole length, squawking at every one who passed. Especially did she revile a peddler, never ceasing her squawks as long as he was in sight. Next she mocked the neighbors' children, whose calls she answered, strangely enough, with just as many squawks as there were words in their call.

When she became tired of this amusement she settled down to "business," nibbling off the overhanging edges of the newly painted clapboards and the edges of the slats from the new blinds. It was not until she had defaced the front of the house sadly that she was discovered and brought down.

Down the front yard ran a long, old-fashioned grape arbor with ornamental front, which had at its top a pole, holding up in the air a ball surmounted by an elaborately sawed-out star. Upon this emblem of her country Polly next fixed her wicked eye, and started up. The lattice-work was an admirable ladder; and stopping only to snip off the tender stems of a few young, growing vines, and half a dozen strings just fastened up to point out to the young moon-flowers the way they should go, she soon reached the pole, climbed it, stood on the ball, and gave her mind to that star.

Before any one noticed her, she had nibbled the edges, bitten off the points, and turned it into a most disreputable affair. When found, she was so pleased with the result of her labor that she scrambled upon the crazy-looking star and squawked at the top of her voice, fluttering her wings and bowing until it seemed that her head must come off.

By this time the family began to think of a bill for damages, and madam was locked up, but it seemed cruel in the country to shut up a bird, and everything she did was so funny that one could n't long be vexed at her. So the next morning the door was again opened, and Polly started out on a new tack.

This time she mounted to the top of the arbor, and started on a promenade down the sharp edge of the board that formed the ridge. This was a brave feat for the cockatoo, who always liked to keep close to her friends; and she had adventures on the way.

First a bee flew over, very near her head. This frightened her terribly. She lifted her wings, held one over her head to protect it, and crouched to avoid the attack she seemed to expect. Then she turned and twisted, ran a few steps, and at last shrieked loudly for some one to come, not seeing that the bee had gone on about its business and was out of sight.

II

Polly was afraid of everything. If a fly buzzed past her, she ducked her head as if she had been hit; and when a pair of robins came near, engaged in a dispute about something, she went almost mad with fright. She ran to the pole which held the star, climbed it rapidly with beak and claws, perched on the tiptop, bowed and spread her wings wide, then lifted them above her head like a shield. This time she did not squawk, but she was in great terror.

Next day she had the pleasure of scaring a

robin. She was on a side-bar of the arbor when one of these birds alighted on the opposite side. In her alarm madam bowed and called out, "Poor Polly!" as if to introduce herself. The robin stared an instant in amazement at this unbirdlike performance, and then flew.

Polly was not unlike some boys. She was a tyrant and a bully with those who feared her, and a dastardly coward with those who did not fear her. The least bird, coming into the cherry-tree, — a tiny yellow warbler, or a minute creeper not so big as her head, — startled her half out of her wits. She would drive the half-grown chickens all round the yard, so long as they ran; but the instant one of the chickens stood and faced her, she turned herself and ran, squawking as if for life.

There was never a droller sight than her running down the length of the ridge board, — which soon came to be her favorite promenade, — holding her wings out and shaking them, and squawking madly, stopping when she came to a bunch of grapes not much bigger than pin-heads to snip it off.

On one side of the arbor roof was the nest of a chipping sparrow. We were interested to see what she would do with it, and ready to interfere if she should go too near.

The chipping sparrow, however, was a wise little mother; she did not need our help. As soon as the cockatoo came near, the small bird appeared before her, fluttering as if afraid, and Polly at once advanced toward her. The question of whether she should drive or be driven was always decided by the actions of her opponent.

So Polly ran, bowing and squawking, with crest up and her war frenzy on, while the cunning sparrow fluttered along, dragging her wings, and keeping well out of the large bird's reach until she had led her far enough. Then she slipped behind some leaves and returned to her nest, leaving Madam Polly staring in blank amazement, plainly wondering where that bird had gone.

The cockatoo had very decided opinions about the family. With the son of the house she was generally at war; she often bit him, and was always ready to show fight.

With her mistress she was on her good behavior, for she recognized her as the lawgiver for pets, and the locker-up of cages; she obeyed her more readily than any other person.

But her darling was the master, who let her do as she liked, and petted and coddled her always. On his knee she would sit an hour at a

time, perfectly quiet, satisfied to be near him. For him she would sing her droll little wheedling song. To his room she would go, when sometimes she got out of her cage in the morning, and tap on the door to be let in. He was always her refuge in terror or distress.

There was nothing Polly disliked so much as to be left alone. If she were locked in her cage, she made the air ring with calls and cries, and if loose — even though reveling in mischief — she flew down and waddled across the grass — though she hated walking on the ground — to the always open door, and hurried in so as to be near somebody.

One pleasure Polly discovered that was not mischief, and only one; it was swinging. She liked to seize with both feet a long, hanging twig, and, by flapping her wings, keep herself in violent motion. Thus she often swung back and forth for a long time, hanging back down in an attitude that most birds greatly dislike.

Five months of fun Polly had in the country, and then, with the family's return home, her summer outing was over.

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

I

For many years there lived in my house a little bird, an English goldfinch, whose vagaries were very amusing to the household. His supreme desire was for a friend, or an object to which he might devote himself.

Out of every family that lived in the Bird Room he selected the one he preferred, and then lavished upon that one his love, and attentions that were often funny, but sometimes pathetic. The beloved object was always larger than himself, always unresponsive, and once really cross to him.

I have told the story of his affection for a scarlet tanager, and his admiration of the antics of a blackbird. I will now tell of his devotion to a golden oriole.

This oriole, who had come from Europe, was never anything in my house but a great, stupid, lumpish fellow. No doubt his experiences at the hands of man had soured him past cure, and he may have been intelligent enough in his native land, but he was not to be won by all the kind-

ness that was lavished upon him. He flew into as mad a panic after six months of gentle treatment as he did on the first day.

I saw no signs of intelligence, and I could not gain his confidence. A pining, unhappy captive wrings my heart, but a stupid one repels me, and the name which seemed naturally to belong to this bird was "Goose."

Not that anything was implied derogatory to the real goose, for I have great regard for that bird, and a genuine respect for her intelligence; but the golden oriole was what we commonly call "a goose," that is, a little less than idiotic — not quite a downright fool.

At first he refused to eat; for a week I thought he would starve himself. Mockingbird food of the freshest was before him all the time, fruits of several kinds, lettuce, and everything I could think of to tempt his appetite, but not one thing would he even look at, excepting meal-worms. Of those wriggling creatures he would eat twenty in a day, perhaps more. Though I gave him as many as I dared, they did not satisfy him.

At last, one day when I was out, he fell to eating the bird food, emptied the dish in an hour, and after that I could hardly keep him supplied.

His hunger appeased, he wanted nothing more, except a perch on which to sit crouched down

upon his toes all day. For the room and its inmates he cared not the least.

A bird that shows no curiosity about a place so new to him as a room is usually of a low order of intelligence. There is nothing so uninteresting in a Bird Room, or out of it either, for that matter, as one who takes what comes and says nothing and shows no interest.

I want my birds to talk and notice things. I may not always understand them, but since they have not learned "society manners," they act out their feelings naturally, and close watching for a long time makes one expert in translating this language of expression.

In spite of my efforts, I could not feel much interest in this stranger. He was a beauty, larger than a robin, and pure lemon in color all over. He had no tail, but I knew nature would supply one, and I waited.

From the hour of the golden oriole's arrival in the room, the goldfinch was strongly attracted to him. As soon as he was placed in his new quarters the little bird went over, alighted on a perch close to his wires, and after a few moments' study of the stranger, began to talk to him in a low chatter.

The "goose" paid no heed to him. Then the goldfinch went a step further and began to

sing. It was quite different from his usual loud, careless song, being low and sweet, uttered with wings held slightly out and body turning from side to side, while his eyes were fixed upon the oriole.

It was curious and peculiar, and not at all the way in which he had treated either of his former friends.

The oriole could not help noticing this, and evidently did not know what to make of it. He became uneasy, and after fidgeting about on his perch he dropped to the floor, where he stood and stared blankly at his small serenader. Soon, however, he grew accustomed to the attentions and took them as a matter of course — as wiser folk will sometimes do.

II

From that day the goldfinch spent more than half his time before the shrine of his idol. He bathed in a hurry, and performed his toilet as quickly as he could, for he never dressed his feathers in the presence of the oriole. He took his meals in a sort of picnic style, going to his own cage for every seed, and returning to his usual seat to shell and eat it.

What there was interesting about the big,

yellow bird who sat like a wooden image on the lowest perch close by the food dish, I could never guess; but the goldfinch seemed to be naturally social, and pining for companionship.

There was another one that I know of, who, while he was alone, allowed his plumage to get very rough, and took almost no care of himself; but as soon as another bird was put into his cage, he fell at once to bathing and dressing his feathers, till he was in perfect order. Then he devoted himself to his new friend with eagerness.

A funny scene took place between my goldfinch and another bird one summer. The stranger was an American goldfinch, in his fall dress of olive and black, who, for safe keeping till a cage was brought, was put into the private apartment of my bird, and the door shut.

The cage owner received his visitor hospitably, chatted with him, allowed him to enjoy the comforts of the cage, the seed and water, and even his choice and limited dainty — the hemp seed scattered over the gravel.

All day long this amiable state of things lasted, but when bedtime came, there was a change. The guest wished to retire, of course, and also, of course, no place would do but the top perch.

At this point, however, his host drew the line. He could share his food and water, his cage, and even his beloved hemp seed, but to allow a stranger upon his private sleeping-perch was too much. He turned suddenly so savage that the poor little newcomer was obliged to retreat.

To sleep on a low perch with any one else higher is repugnant to the very soul of a bird. The stranger plucked up spirit, and a struggle took place. Indeed, to restore peace the American had finally to be removed.

No such trouble arose with the golden oriole; he did not care where anybody slept, but it was soon plain that he was not exempt from the common lot; he had his own sore trial. He had determined not to allow his tail to grow, for what reason I cannot imagine. The instant a tiny quill showed itself, with its lovely yellow feather folded inside, the bearer went to work to remove it. It was hard work, but he twisted himself almost into a knot, and pulled and tugged till he got it out, and then — utterly exhausted — laid his head back on its feather pillow and took a nap.

I gave him meat according to bird-book directions; I changed his food; I did all I could think of, but he kept up this bad habit all winter,

and I began to fear we should never see him with a tail.

We never did, in fact, although as spring came on nature roused herself for a grand effort, and sent out five or six feathers at once. Now, I thought, the stupid fellow will be discouraged, and the tail will grow.

He was discouraged. After hours of the hardest labor he gave it up — but he gave up his life, too. Since he could not have his will, he seemed to lose what little interest he had in life, and one day he went to sleep never to wake.

No one grieved except the goldfinch, for the bird was so unhappy no one could wish to have him live. The little bird hung around the cage for a while quite dazed by his loss, and evidently expecting, or at least hoping, some morning to see again his dearly beloved golden goose.

THE SAUCY ORIOLE

I

The Baltimore oriole is so gorgeous in dress, so charming of voice, and so strongly individual in his ways, that his modest little spouse slips through life by his side almost unnoticed. Yet she is a not unworthy mate; her dress, though subdued, is more pleasing than his, her individuality is quite as marked, and she, too, can sing.

A pair of orioles that spent one winter in my Bird Room were very entertaining, and the little madam was the most saucy creature I ever saw in feathers. She was a ridiculous object as to plumage, being featherless on the head and without a sign of a tail; but never was an oriole long depressed by a little matter of that kind; she was just as self-possessed and as dignified as if she had been the queen of the whole feathered world.

Her first effort in my room was to establish her right to a bath whenever and wherever she chose to take it. The very first morning, while the older residents were bathing, and every bath-

tub was occupied, she made up her mind to go in. Nothing daunted by size, she picked out the biggest bird in the room to dispossess. It was a blue jay, whose bathing-dish was on the floor.

A droll figure she made when she went down to drive him out. She was not a quarter his size, and looked — without a tail — about as big as a wren. She alighted on the edge of his dish; but when the big fellow stopped splashing and stood up in the water, looking quite able to eat her, his warlike crest rising and his large eyes fixed upon the intruder, she did not quite dare to insist.

Her next choice was more fortunate. She went to the table where a Brazilian cardinal, considerably bigger than herself, was bathing, drove him away, and stepped into the water herself.

She began her bath like any other bird, by thrusting her head in the water, but after one dip she lifted it high and flapped her wings vigorously, getting so wet that when she attempted to fly up to her cage, she fell to the floor instead. That did not disturb her, for she knew very well the use of a ladder that ran up to the cages for the benefit of disabled birds, and she delighted to hop up and down its rounds.

While the oriole was herself almost a stranger,

an American robin came to live in the room. He looked so big among orioles and tanagers and bluebirds, that nearly every one gave him a wide berth.

Not so did my saucy little oriole. When he came out of his cage and took refuge on the top of it, while he looked about to see what sort of a place he had got into, madam flew over and alighted beside him.

In robin fashion of showing hostility he hopped six inches into the air, then turned his beak toward her and ran at her. She met him with open mouth, daring him to come on. At three inches' distance he stopped and snapped his big beak. She bowed, which was her way of showing fight, perked up the tail-coverts in lieu of a tail, and did not budge an inch. Two or three times the robin ran at her, and every time her significant bows and determined air warned him off, till at last he left the cage altogether.

The next day, during a domestic breeze, — for matters were not yet harmoniously settled at home, — her cage-mate chased the little oriole and she took refuge in the robin's cage. The owner was at home, and disconcerted by the sudden call, gave a cry and flew out. In a moment he regretted his hasty action, and came back to his own roof, whence madam quickly drove him by

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

pecking his toes. He then dropped to his door-perch, and went into the cage.

The intruder sat calmly on the perch, utterly unconcerned at his presence. He hopped about uneasily, went to the middle perch, glanced above at her, then jumped down, all the time uttering a low cry. Several times he thrust his head out of the door as if to go, then drew back, apparently thinking it cowardly to desert his own quarters. But after half a dozen feints he did go, leaving her in possession.

II

A female Virginia cardinal, with a strong will of her own, was the next bird that the saucy oriole molested. When the impertinent visitor alighted beside her in her own cage, the cardinal drew herself up very straight, raised her crest, and opened her big beak. The interloper bowed and snatched at her, plainly trying to seize her tongue, and once she did catch the lower mandible.

For a moment the Virginian evidently hesitated as to the manner of meeting this sort of insult. She shut her mouth, and drew herself up again with dignity, but soon afterward she flew across the room.

Elated by her success with his mate, the oriole

next tried her tactics on the cardinal himself, a serious-minded personage, who never descended to personalities with any one — except his spouse.

She cornered him upon a perch, followed him along, as he moved off to avoid her, till he could go no farther, and then, as he opened his mouth at her, she snatched at his tongue.

He shut his beak, and she gave him a sharp peck in the side. He was furious; his crest stood up, his wings quivered, but he did not touch her, nor would he fly. Another time she relieved the scarlet tanager of a meal-worm he was preparing to eat by coolly snatching it out of his mouth.

Never were birds so curious and interested in their surroundings as the two orioles. They investigated every corner of the room, lifted papers to peep under them, pulled towels about to see what was hidden by them, pried open books, crept between the slats of a blind, went all over their neighbors' cages on the outside, climbing on the wires and pulling out apple or other fruit and dropping it to the floor.

They were always fond of climbing, and hanging head down was a favorite attitude.

They liked also to use their sharp beaks; if one of them could get one toe into a torn place in the wall-paper, he — or she — would hang on and pick holes in it.

Giving up a thing he has set his heart on never occurs to an oriole. One of mine took it into his naughty head to occupy his neighbor's wire apartment. I drove him out; I caught him in my hand and took him out; I removed food and water, and still he would come back.

When he saw that I noticed his flying to the door-perch, and was instantly ready to scare him off, he tried another way of approach. He climbed around on the wires from the back, and tried to steal in so quietly that I would not notice him — as I could tell by his glances at me. I drove him off, and then he tried another way. He came quietly up the ladder, looked over at me, and then slipped silently through the door.

I had a fine chance to learn the unconquerable persistence of the oriole, for till the day of his liberation he never gave up trying to occupy his neighbor's house.

When spring came and the Baltimore began to sing, and when his little cage-mate had been made beautiful by a complete suit of feathers and a tail as long as his own, they went their way into the big world outside the windows, and I saw no more of my charming but saucy little oriole.

ANTICS IN THE BIRD ROOM

Birds have many queer ways when one can watch them closely, as I could in my Bird Room. In taking exercise, for example, no two do it in the same way.

The Brazilian cardinal turned perfect summersets. Standing on one end of his cage roof, he would suddenly spring into the air as if he were going through the ceiling. Just before touching it, he would turn completely over, so that for one instant his feet were toward the wall and his back toward the floor. At this point his wings were flat against his sides, and his body curved so that his head and tail pointed toward the floor. Then, without opening the wings, he passed down again, turning as he went, and alighted right side up at the other end of his cage.

This prank was played so rapidly that I could not follow it perfectly with my eyes, all through, and to see how he held himself at the point where he turned, I had to fix my eyes on that point and not try to follow his flight up and back.

This particular antic delighted the cardinal

CARDINAL

so much that he often kept it up an hour at a time.

Another bird I had, danced. This was a skylark. He would come out only when his cage was put on the floor, and then he went around the edge of the room half flying, half running, taking mincing little steps, and waving his wings at the same time. It was a graceful, fairy-like dance.

Still another inmate of the Bird Room used to fly across the room from one side to the other and plant his two feet squarely against the wall on each side. He did it very swiftly, and did not pause a second, but he did it with so much force that it sounded like a knock.

Sometimes a bird will prefer to exercise in his cage, and then he flies madly around his perches, over and under and behind and around them, hardly touching them with the tips of his toes, and looking every minute as if he would bang himself against the wires, but he never does. Most birds simply fly about the room with more or less fury.

BLIZZARD

Blizzard we named her; not because that rough, unpleasant name particularly well suited the demure little damsel in dusty brown who came to live with us, but for the reason that she came in with the blizzard that tossed and tumbled, and half buried New York, on that famous Monday of March, claiming our hospitalities against the inhospitable world of wind and snow outside. How she got into the house is still a mystery. Mamma thought she must have come down the chimney and through the stovepipe, but it is hard to believe that a bird, however distressed, would venture into a long, dark tunnel like that, not knowing where it might end.

It seems more likely that when some one opened a door to go out, and was met by a wild sweep of the gale, and a dash of fine, sharp snow in his face, that half blinded him, poor little Blizzard flew in with it; perhaps because she saw warmth and comfort inside, or possibly just because she was blown in and could not help herself.

However it came about, there she was, bright and pert as a sparrow can be, and plainly delighted to get out of the storm. She rebelled at being caught, and even bit savagely at her captor, but in spite of that she was taken upstairs to a warm, snug room and set free, where we thought she would be safe, for Blizzard was not the only guest in the house.

There was first, Elizabeth, the cat, who liked nothing better than tender young sparrow for breakfast, and knew well how to get it, too; and Napoleon, the dog, who made it his particular duty to guard the household from all four-footed and feathered enemies; and worse, — for those two could be shut out of the room, — there was Laura.

Laura was a parrot of high degree and beautiful manners, dressed in several shades of green, with a gay yellow cap, and a dash of rose-color on her wing. She did not at all know what to think of this vagabond of the street, whose vulgar antics she was accustomed to watch through the windows only. She turned her aristocratic head on one side, fixed one large red eye on the plebeian, and plainly did not altogether approve of her for a companion.

But Blizzard had no scruples; she was not in the least afraid of her high-mightiness; in fact,

she never saw the bird she was afraid of, and she assumed the aggressive herself.

For some moments the two stared at each other, head feathers erected and all bristled up for war; then suddenly, with a keen appreciation of the advantage of taking the initiative, the sparrow made a dash at Laura, and passed just over her head without pausing.

That insulted bird started, and gave a violent snap of her big beak, just too late to touch her lively enemy. Again and again was this performance repeated, the saucy street ruffian swooping down as if to annihilate the stately parrot, and that bird every time surprised out of her dignity, startled, snapping her bill, trying to seize her tormentor.

At length Blizzard tired of this amusement, and proceeded to show contempt of her roommate in a new way, by alighting on the perch beside her. The perch was three or four feet long, and the size of a broomstick.

Laura, sitting calm and composed at one end, was suddenly shocked by the sparrow dropping down upon it about four inches from her seat. In a moment, after one look of horror and disgust, down went Laura's head, and off she started hand over hand, as parrots walk, beak wide open, to seize her disreputable foe.

The graceless upstart simply hopped back a step or two. Laura followed, snapped again, and again the sparrow retreated. Thus they passed down the length of the perch, and when they reached the end, Blizzard hopped over the back of her clumsy pursuer, came down the other side, and led her back in the same impertinent way.

There was one droll sort of dance that Laura indulged in that seemed to amuse, or at least to interest Blizzard, for while it was going on she stood still in her turn, and looked at every movement. The excitement was produced by scraping a crumpled newspaper over the matting.

What it suggested to the parrot, no one could guess, but the instant it began she erected her feathers, spread her tail like a fan, expanded her wings, put her beak down and rubbed the upper edge of it along the floor, while she walked round and round, toeing in, and always ploughing the matting with her big bill. This curious movement she kept up without pause so long as the noise was continued.

An eating-place was set up for the storm refugee on the window-sash, and bread and water provided for her comfort. The water she accepted with thanks, but she soon discovered that Laura's now vacant cage contained a dainty more to her taste — a large, square cracker. This she

pecked at eagerly, first standing outside and putting her head between the wires; but finding this inconvenient, after looking about on every side, and scorning the open door as a probable trap, she slipped between the wires and helped herself freely, hammering the cracker to bits and scattering crumbs all over the floor, while the owner of the cage observed with displeasure the disorderly manners of her small neighbor.

II

After enduring the sparrow's performances awhile, Laura went home, and the door was shut.

We were sure she could guard her food, for she was a bird of spirit herself, and not used to being imposed upon. To the ladies of the family she was very gracious, readily accepting a finger for a perch, and kissing and behaving in a charming manner, but I regret to say that to the gentlemen she was very different.

Whether she had been teased till her temper was soured toward the sex, no one knew, but from the smallest boy to the biggest man she detested the whole race.

On the approach of the son of the household, aged six, she invariably seized the edge of her seed dish, and shook it so violently that seeds

were scattered all over the floor; if his hand came near, she bit it, and sometimes she flew at his face, screaming and chattering with fury.

Blizzard did not approve of the new arrangement, but cracker she was bound to have; and after a few cautious advances, holding herself ready for instant flight, she grew careless, and plainly made up her mind that Laura was far too slow to catch so very wide-awake a personage as herself.

So once more she slipped through, and busied herself on the floor within six inches of her big neighbor, getting even so bold as to snatch at Laura's tail when it hung in her way.

For some time the parrot looked on, with wise head turned over one side, and Blizzard became perfectly indifferent, when at last the long-suffering bird leaned over and snatched up the intruding scapegrace by the back.

Had it been the head, this would be the end of the poor sparrow's story, but the feathers are thick on the back. Blizzard screamed at the top of her voice, the family ran into the room, and the bird escaped, leaving a mouthful of feathers with Laura.

This experience subdued the street gamin for a while, and she retired to the top of the window-casing to recover from her fright and investigate

the damage to her draperies, while Laura sat bridling in her cage, saying "Cr-r-r — cr-r-r" in a low but evidently crowing tone, as if meaning, "There, miss! how do you like that? Perhaps you 'll keep out of my house!"

As it began to grow dark, Blizzard prepared for the night, and in the way one might expect from a sparrow. There was no elaborate dressing of plumage, removing of the day's dust, and drawing each soft feather in place for the night; she simply laid in an extra supply of provisions — fairly stuffed herself, till we were alarmed.

Perhaps, poor thing, it was not from greediness, but because she had a dim feeling that this unusual warmth and abundance might be a dream, and that she should wake up to find everything covered with snow and no food to be had, and so it was the part of wisdom to fill herself while it lasted; plenty of wisdom of a certain sort abode in that small, brown head.

Whatever the reason, she did eat an enormous supper, and then retired to the place she had first selected as her private retreat — on top of the window frame.

There she composed herself, and nothing was heard from her till morning; but alas, we forgot the early-rising habits of the sparrow's family. Laura, used to life in a house, never stirred a

feather till other people got up, but this street vagrant began with the first streak of light to fly around the room, to ask for breakfast, to stir up Laura, and to disturb things generally. In fact, she made herself so disagreeable that it was resolved to turn her out to care for herself.

Meanwhile the snow and wind had been having it all their own way out of doors. Great drifts were piled up against the windows, the sidewalks were lost, and even the street looked like mountain-chains on a small scale.

No one thought of going out of the house, for the first step from the door plunged one into a snowdrift over his head. Nothing could be done toward clearing it away till the snow stopped falling, or the frolicsome wind ceased playing tricks with it, and building a wild country up in the middle of the city. So no one went out, horses stood in their stables, and not a sparrow showed a feather outside.

This day Blizzard was fuller of pranks than ever, and there was not a bit of mischief that little brain could contrive that failed to be done.

The last of her tricks, which almost had a sad ending for herself and us, was to set the house on fire. Actually, with engines snowed into their houses, streets filled with mountains of loose, dry snow, and hydrants all out of sight under them,

that incorrigible rascal picked a match from the matchsafe, carried it off under the bed, and probably pounded the end to see if the little brown knob was good to eat.

However she did it, she flew up suddenly, and in a moment there was an odor of burning. Fortunately some one was in the room, or we should no doubt in a few minutes have been all afire, for there in the crack between the breadths of matting the match was brightly burning. The matting itself was already afire, and a nice little bonfire would have carried us all off in smoke, if no one had been there to put it out.

That settled Miss Blizzard's fate, and as soon as the sun came out, a window was opened, and away she went out into the white world to join the army of feathered tramps to which she belonged.

THREE SPARROWS THAT LIVE IN A HOUSE

I

I KNOW a house in Brooklyn which is a sort of bird's hospital, where are living more birds than people, and where all wounded and suffering feathered creatures find shelter and comfort.

While I am writing this story, there are, among the other birds, three English sparrows, street birds that had been hurt, and rescued from cats and cruel boys, and taken care of till they were well.

One of these birds is sentimental. He wants to be coddled all the time. He is so grateful for his comfortable home that he is unhappy if he cannot be with one of the family who have been so kind to him.

Most tame birds are satisfied if they can perch on a shoulder or arm of the person they like, but not so this sparrow. He wants to be held in a warm hand, or snuggled up within the arm, and he is so determined to get into his favorite place that when the family want to do something

besides hold a bird, they have to roll him up in a shawl and lay him in a snug corner of bed or chair.

The thing he likes best of all is to be taken into bed, and he cannot fly to go there himself. So in the early morning, long before any one, except a bird, wants to get up or even to be wakened, he will begin his loud squawks, and never stop till one of his kind mistresses gets up, takes him in her hand, and holds him shut up in it under her cheek. There he is happy and still, and she can sleep as long as she likes. Did ever a bird have so droll a sleeping-place?

The second queer sparrow was almost dead when brought in from the street. He recovered his health entirely, but he, too, can never fly, so he is obliged to live in a house. This bird is not sentimental — far from it! he is very fond of eating, perhaps even a little greedy. And besides being fond of his dinner, he seems to like a joke.

He always insists on going to meals, for he understands the dinner-bell as well as any one. He squawks and calls and makes a commotion till he is carried to the table and set down upon it. Then he runs about, tastes everything, makes up his mind what he likes best, and eats as much as he wants of it.

ENGLISH SPARROW

He is fond of a joke, as I said, and he shows it in this way: the thing he likes best to eat is butter, and after taking a bit, he always wants to wipe his beak, as birds do. The place he chooses to use for this purpose is the coat-sleeve of the head of the family. Grease spots on the coat-sleeve are too much for the most amiable man to endure, so the bird was early made to understand he must not do it, but must use the tablecloth or the edge of a dish.

The clever bird knew what was meant, for this family talk so much to their pets that they learn to understand a great deal. They seem to know perfectly well what is said to them, and what they must not do. The English sparrow is one of the sharpest witted of birds, and he plainly understood — as his manner showed — that he must not use a coat-sleeve for a napkin.

But English sparrows have no notion of giving up anything they like, and this one is not only obstinate like his fellows, but has a spice of mischief besides. So now, while taking his meals as usual with the family, he slyly watches his chance. When the coat-wearer is particularly busy and has forgotten for a moment to be on guard, the saucy bird will thrust his beak into the butter, hop silently but quickly to the coveted sleeve, wipe the beak, and dash away before

he can be touched, and then perhaps chuckle over the joke the rest of the day.

II

The third sparrow living in this house is, however, the most astonishing one. In this protected home, where food and drink never fail and no work is needed to secure them, where street fun and street dangers and domestic affairs and all other sources of work or play are denied him, he has turned his active mind to the improvement of his talents, and with two canaries for companions, has learned their song.

I spent some hours in the house one day for the purpose of hearing this wonderful thing — an English sparrow singing like a canary. He was shy about showing off, but I kept very quiet in the other parlor while his mistress coaxed him with talk and piano music to sing. Before long, finding himself unable to resist, he dropped the ordinary street squawks, with which he had been regaling us, long enough to sing several times. He poured out with great freedom all the warbles and quavers of the canary song, including a remarkable trill, and he did it better than the canaries who taught him, because his natural voice is better than theirs, being richer

and fuller, and not so shrill. One who heard him without seeing him would never think of the singer being anything but an unusually fine singer of the canary family.

Think of it! a common wild English sparrow, saved from a violent death in March, and by October singing a fellow captive's song better than he can sing it himself. Perhaps this accomplished bird, if sent out into the streets as a missionary, might teach the others to do the same. We could forgive the English sparrows a good deal if they would fill our streets with song.

When at last I had to leave the house, I went into the back parlor where the bird lives, without canaries at present, in a cage among house plants in a sunny window, and looked at him. Plenty of food and water, and no struggle for life in the dust of the street, have given his coat rich and pure coloring, so that he is really as beautiful as it is possible for one of his tribe to be. Nothing less than seeing him could convince me that the fine song I had heard could have come from a common English sparrow.

DOCTOR DOT

I

Dot was the roundest, the funniest, and the wisest chicken that ever lived in a house, and she never was in the least afraid of anybody. For a while after she was adopted into the family she ate only bread and milk, and then varied this baby food with crumbs from the table, with now and then a fly which was careless enough to alight near her.

She delighted to be on the table when the family were eating. She would run from one to another, cocking her wise little head on one side, and accepting a crumb of bread or a bit of potato from each one. But as she grew bigger, and made experiments for herself, such as taking a nip of the butter, hopping up on to the platter and getting her feet into the gravy, a law had to be made that Miss Dot must take her meals alone.

Her greatest treat in these early days was to be put up on the window frame, in the middle where the two sashes meet, there to hunt flies, which

delight in that spot. She would run after a fly as eagerly as any of her cousins on the ground, and would often be so heedless as to fall off, so that Ella, her little mistress, had to stand by her while on that dangerous elevation, lest she should fall and break her neck.

As she grew bigger, Ella decided that although Dot was very well for a pet name, it was hardly dignified enough for so important a personage as she had become. After much thought it was enlarged into Dorothea Daniel Davidson, the latter after the uncle who presented her to Ella. She was usually called Dot, or D. D., or Doctor (which D. D. stands for, you know), and at last, in this way, the name Doctor Dot became pretty well fastened upon her. It was rather a queer name, to be sure, but Dorothea did not care; she would answer to any one of the whole list.

It might have been rather lonely for one poor little chick in a house full of big people, but she was not alone; she had one special playmate, Mother Bunch, and plenty of neighbors besides. The most important of these was Abercrombie Fitz Plantagenet, the cat, who lived in a basket that hung from the gas fixture, and was never so happy as when her basket was set spinning by some kind hand.

One would think this performance would have

muddled her brains and made her a dizzy, topsy-turvy good-for-nothing, but so far from that she was one of the wisest and most clear-headed of her race, as you might know from her name. When not spinning around in her airy residence, she would sit for hours on a chair by the window, looking at the passers, and evidently closely studying human nature. Should no chair be properly placed, or should the blinds be closed, this wise cat — Cromie, as she was called for "everyday" — would cry and mew, and pull some one's dress, until the difficulty was remedied, when she would take her seat with dignity and resume her studies.

Very different from this stately dame was her baby, the only one which survived a sudden catastrophe in her last family, and was named Mother Bunch because she was such a funny bunch of a thing.

From the first, Mother Bunch and the Doctor were the best of friends; they played together like two kittens. They would roll over and over and run after one another; the kitten would slap and the chicken would nip. The Doctor seemed determined to do everything that Mother Bunch did, and in fact I think she was rather ambitious to be a kitten herself.

When they were in the yard together, she

would play with a bit of hanging clothes-line as the kitten did, taking it in her mouth and running around the post; and she made frantic efforts to climb the clothes-post after Mother Bunch.

At first the Doctor would run from a rat or a cat, but as they grew older and Mother Bunch became blind, she seemed to know she was the protector. A strange cat could no more than show its head in the yard before Doctor Dot flew at it with her mouth open, screaming as an angry hen will. The intruder always quickly decided to retire to a more quiet neighborhood.

Mother Bunch's favorite napping-place was between the blinds and the window, and if she found it closed, she would cry and tease till it was opened for her. Dorothea always took her place on pussy's back during the sleep, partly perhaps to protect her, but a little to indulge in a nap herself.

She was fond of playing with children as she saw the kitten doing. She would run after them and snatch at their clothes, and once she drove a little boy into a corner, and frightened him half out of his wits by jumping at him as if she would eat him up.

Doctor Dot always seemed to think the small flower-bed in the yard was made for her amuse-

ment. No sooner would a tiny plant show its head above the ground than she would pull it up, apparently for fun, or to see what it was doing there, and she would scratch up the earth around it to see if there were any more impertinent little leaves around. The air with which she did this was so comical that Ella could n't feel very sorry about the flowers.

II

As time went on, it looked very funny to see a hen about the house, though she was such a small one, but she refused to be sent out of the house to live. If she found the door shut against her, she would get on to a window-sill and peep and cry to be let in, till some kind heart inside took pity and opened the way for her.

All babies grow up, and now Dot was no longer a chicken, but a full-grown bantam hen, and her frolics with Mother Bunch were at an end. New notions came into her head; she began to think it was high time she had a nest like other hens. She grew uneasy, clucked around like any old feathered matron, and teased Ella till she fixed a box with a nice nest for her, and into that Dot retired and laid her first egg.

Such a cackling and clucking over one small egg was never heard. So important and fussy was Madam Dorothea that it was almost impossible to live with her. Egg after egg was laid in that nest till she had enough to suit her ideas of a family, and then she took to setting, in regular poultry-yard fashion. When at last she came off with ten chicks, the proudest mother in the world, another decree went forth, that now indeed Dorothea Daniel Davidson must live in a house of her own in the yard.

So under a large pear-tree, in a pretty low-roofed cottage with a lattice front, now went to live Doctor Dot and her babies ten. She was so much engrossed with her cares, so concerned for the safety of those ten little feathery balls on legs, that she never seemed to regret her change of home. When the chicks grew too big to sleep under their mother's wings, a larger house was built, with perches and a door, and in that the family were nicely accommodated.

One more cunning thing Dot did before she settled down into the life of a common hen. One night the coop door blew shut and she and her family could not get in. It was cold, and she longed for her comfortable roost inside, so she came to the house for help. The door was shut, but she flew up to the old window and

tapped on the glass with her bill. Some of the family, not seeing very well, were frightened a little, but Ella knew her at once.

"Why, it 's Dot!" she said.

She opened the window to let her in, but that was not what Dot wanted. She pulled Ella's dress and tried to draw her to the door.

"Perhaps she wants help," suggested one, and Ella started out to see. She opened the door, and Dot ran on ahead eagerly. Ella followed, and she led directly to the shut-up coop, where the whole bantam family were collected. No sooner was the door opened than they all hurried in, and in a few minutes were snugly asleep for the night.

BIRDS OUT OF DOORS

MY FIRST BIRD

Many years ago, when I was a schoolgirl, I lived in an old-fashioned house away back from the street, in the outskirts of a Western city. It was before the English sparrows had come to drive other birds away, and our own native birds used to live in town with us. Vireos sang from morning till night in the trees that shaded the streets; Baltimore orioles swung their beautiful cradles from the tall boughs of the elms; and robins ran over the lawns without danger of having their hard-got worms snatched out of their mouths by the impudent foreign sparrows, as they are now.

I knew nothing about birds, and was absorbed in schoolbooks and music lessons and all school-day interests, but the first spring that we lived in the old-fashioned place, one bird forced himself upon my attention, and he was the first I ever noticed.

The grounds around the house were very large, and halfway down to the front fence was an old rustic arbor that was seldom visited. In or

about that arbor somewhere, dwelt a bird with his family, and every evening and half the night, as it seems to me now, he sang to us. As soon as it grew too dark to see plainly, the song began, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!"

Because it was too late to see to read, I used to sit on the steps and listen, and think it the loneliest bird song I ever heard, but I never saw the singer. Though, as I have said, it was in the edge of a city, with houses all around, so common were birds about us then that no one thought of disturbing him. It being also before the days when every boy thinks he must have a "collection," no one tried to find the nest, though there were three boys in the house with me, and several more next door.

One evening after the whip-poor-will had sung for some weeks, I was surprised to hear a droll baby voice trying to imitate his notes.

On listening, I found that the elder was teaching the youngster — actually giving him a music lesson. First the perfect song rang out loud and clear, and the weak quavering voice tried to copy it. Then the singer repeated the strain, and the infant tried again. So it went on night after night till the little one could sing almost as well as his father.

WHIP-POOR-WILL

That was my first bit of bird study, though I could never see the singer, did not even know how he looked, and had nobody to tell me where to find out; besides being always so absorbed in books, which I loved almost more than anything in the world, that I did not try much. But I never forgot the baby whip-poor-will's music lessons, and have always counted him the first bird I ever knew.

The reason I failed to see the whip-poor-will, though I stole down to the arbor so softly, was because he could see in the dark so much better than I could; and when he saw me coming, he slipped off his perch and flew away so silently with his soft plumage that I did not hear him. And the reason I could never find the nest was because the mother bird, the eggs, and the little ones were so nearly the color of the ground where they lay that I might almost have stepped on them without seeing them.

The whip-poor-will is about the length of a robin, but much stouter. His dress is gray and black and brown and white, very much mixed up. His mate is a little more brown than he, and she makes no nest, but lays her two eggs on the ground, or a bed of dead leaves, and brings up her twin babies in the same cheerless place. Droll little birdlings they are, too, in

suits of soft down so nearly the color of the ground that when they cuddle down and keep still, as I have said, it is almost impossible to see them.

THE THRUSHES WHO LIVED IN THE CITY

In a city I know is a yard which is made safe for birds by having a high, tight board fence, with the top fixed so that cats cannot walk on it.

The top of fences in the city — as you probably know — is the common parade ground of the cats who have no other place for walking out, where they can look into the yards and decide where they want to go down. It is right they should have some place for exercise, for when cats and dogs are shut up in cities they should be made as comfortable as possible.

The family I am telling you about are very fond of birds, and they hoped, when the birds passed over in the spring, to coax some of them to stay, by making a safe place for them; so, as I said, they fixed the fence to keep off the cats, and then set out shrubs and vines and other growing things in the yard, till it was a nice cosy place that any bird might enjoy. To their delight a pair of wood thrushes concluded to spend the summer there, and soon a nest was built.

Now cats are very clever little beasts, and though the fence highway was closed to them, they would sometimes get in through the gate or a door, or in some way. Then the birds were very much alarmed and uttered cries of distress. The family, hearing the cries, always rushed out to see what was the matter, and of course drove the cat away.

In a very short time those intelligent birds learned that the people of the house would protect them, and in a few days they began to call upon their human friends when in trouble. Instead of just calling and crying where they happened to be when a cat appeared, one of the thrushes would go to the back door and give a peculiar call, which was given at no other time. The people soon understood it, and some one would run out to drive away the enemy. If there happened to be no one in the kitchen, so that the birds could get no help on that side of the house, they would fly to the front piazza, perch on the rail, and call till some one came.

The family were so pleased with the birds' confidence in them that they were very willing to run out to protect them whenever called. All summer long they held themselves ready to obey the calls, and a little family was safely reared, and all flew away for the winter.

WOOD THRUSH

Birds soon learn who are their friends, and become tame. Another pair of birds who were very friendly with a family were Virginia cardinals or cardinal grosbeaks. These are very shy birds, and so afraid of people that they will desert a nest if any one touches it. This pair built in a rosebush on a trellis before a kitchen window, so low that the eleven-year-old son of the family could touch it; he never did touch it, and the birds did not mind when he or any of the family looked at them as much as they liked.

It was not because the birds were stupid or particularly confiding; for when I went there and looked at them, though not very near, they were as wild as if they lived in the woods. They knew I was a stranger, and I could not tell them I was a bird lover, nor stay long enough to have them get acquainted with me.

BARN SWALLOWS IN A FROLIC

Barn swallows are busy little fellows, nearly always soaring around in the air over our heads, appearing not even to see us down on the earth below.

I was greatly surprised one day to find a barn swallow having a frolic with a dog. I was passing through a meadow on the side of a mountain in Massachusetts, to reach a grove where birds lived. The meadow was all in terraces or great steps, and looking down over them, I noticed the queer antics of a dog belonging to the farmhouse where I was staying. First he would appear above the edge of a terrace in great haste, then suddenly disappear, and in a moment show his head at the other end of the grassy steps.

What could be the matter? I hurried down the meadow to the edge of the first fall of the land. There I saw the family pet, a beautiful shepherd dog, much excited, running back and forth on a rather narrow ledge below me. Now he rushed frantically along thirty or forty feet,

with tail wagging as if in sport, then wheeled and ran back in the same eager way. Sometimes he made a dash to the left and tore madly up the side of the mountain; again he flung himself over the edge, going almost heels over head in his zeal.

What could be the cause? I could see no playmate; his young master was mowing farther down the meadow. I thought of woodchucks, — his favorite game, — but though I looked carefully, not one of those wary creatures was to be seen; moreover it is business and not play when dog and woodchuck meet.

At last the dog leaped into the air, and my eye fell upon his playfellow — a barn swallow! I could hardly believe my eyes, but I sat down on the bank and watched for some time the strange game. The dog would sit quietly at one end of the run till the swallow swooped down just over his head, and skimmed along at that height the length of the terrace.

On the appearance of the bird the dog started at full speed after him, and when the swallow turned back the dog did the same. If the bird went up towards the barn, the dog scrambled up the steep bank after him; if downward towards the lower meadow, his four-footed playmate followed. When the bird rose higher, the dog,

as I said, sat down and waited. This they kept up a long time, and I looked on till the dog walked off, as if he had had enough of the fun.

After that I kept close watch of swallows, and I found that they are very sharp to see what is going on below them, and that they like to play — even to play a joke.

One day I had come in from the woods and was resting on the piazza, looking at the birds on the lawn. There were robins and song sparrows running about in the grass, and a flock of swallows flying round and round overhead. All of these were busy catching small flies, and when one had a mouthful he flew off to the barn, where were four or five nests full of hungry young ones.

While I was looking at them, suddenly one left the flock and swooped down at a robin who was hunting for his dinner on the ground. The swallow did not quite touch him, but he came so near that the robin dodged and then straightened up and cried "Tut! tut! tut!" looking up at me as if to see if I had noticed how the swallow had insulted him.

A robin has a good deal of dignity, you know, and does not like to be made to dodge. He looked after the swallow, but it was of no use, for he had joined the others, and I don't suppose

the robin could tell him from his brothers any more than I could.

Another time the swallows were flying round in great circles over a meadow. The hay had just been taken away, and the owner turned his hens in to pick up the grasshoppers and other creatures left without any grass to hide in.

The newcomers did not interfere in the least with the swallows, who get their food entirely from the air; but no sooner did the busy, plodding hens begin to run about, than one or two swallows marked them for a little fun, and began swooping down at them, as the one I told you about had treated the robin.

The birds did not actually touch the hens, but they scared them very much. A hen would dodge and cry out and run a little away, and then go to feeding again. The swallows seemed to think this great fun, for they kept it up till the poor hens were fairly driven out of the field.

Sometimes it is no joke on the part of the swallows. I have seen a party of them drive away a cat who was prowling about, perhaps hoping to catch a bird to eat. This was a serious matter. The birds would fly down and give her a sharp peck on the head or back, and be off so quickly that she could not touch them,

though a cat is very quick herself. This they kept up till the cat would run and hide.

Once I saw several of these birds in the same way drive away a kingfisher who was fishing from a half-sunken fence in a salt marsh on the seashore. I wondered why they disliked to have him there, but after he had gone I saw the reason: there were some baby swallows just out of the nest, and the parents wanted them to perch on the fence, where they could easily feed them. The kingfisher was in their way.

HOW THE DOG INTERFERED

All the tanagers that I have known have been rather shy birds. They do not like to have their nests seen by people, and for that reason I was very much pleased when I found one.

I was walking along a little-used path in the woods with a friend — another bird lover — when we noticed that a beautiful bird in scarlet and black, a scarlet tanager, did not want us to go up that way. He went ahead of us from tree to tree, keeping an eye on us, calling all the time "Chip-chur! Chip-chur!" as if to put some one on guard.

When we stopped a moment to see what the fuss was about, we saw his mate in her modest dress of yellowish green. She was sitting on a low branch saying "Chip-chur!" too, and it was plain she did not like our going up that path either. That made us think there must be a nest somewhere near, and looking sharply around, we both saw it.

The nest was beautifully placed in a sort of arch made by a tall, slender sapling or young

tree being bent over to the ground, probably by a heavy weight of snow, and held there till it grew so. It could not get up straight again to grow into a tree, so the twigs grew out the whole length of the slender trunk, making a beautiful arch, high enough for a child to walk under. At that time it was covered with fresh green leaves, and was one of the prettiest things in the woods. In the middle of this arch was the nest.

The birds, finding that we were quiet, flew away at last, and we at once hid ourselves as well as we could, hoping they would not see us and would come back. There was a tangle of young trees where we were, tall enough to hide us, and we crept under them, covering our heads with branches of leaves so that our hats would not show. Then we sat down and waited for the birds to come back.

Now we were not alone that morning. We had the big dog who always followed my friend, and we took him into the tangle with us.

Pretty soon the tanagers appeared, the scarlet beauty perched high up on a tree, looking sharply around to see that no spectators were about, while his mate tried to get up her courage to go to the nest, which was not finished. Nearer and nearer she came, pausing and looking around

and calling to her mate to make sure he was near.

At last the shy bird was on the arch, and close to the nest, just about to take the last step and go in, and we hardly dared to breathe though mosquitoes nearly drove us wild, when suddenly there came a terrific report — the dog sneezed!

Like a flash, away went the tanagers. No doubt they thought something dreadful — an earthquake, perhaps — had happened, for they never came back to finish that nest. We went there many times, but never a tanager was to be seen. The next time they hid their nest so well that we never found it, and weeks afterward we saw them in another part of the woods feeding a nestling.

UPPER AND LOWER STORY IN THE BIRD WORLD

In a Western city where I spent part of a summer, I saw a curious thing among the birds. There were two kinds of birds living in the business streets, English sparrows and purple martins.

Now these two birds are not very friendly, because they both want to live in bird houses and holes and such sheltered places. The martin has to go south in the winter to find food, and the English sparrow does not, for he finds his food anywhere. When the martins come back in the spring to their old homes, — martin houses, boxes, and such places, — they find the sparrows living in them, every one filled full. Then there is likely to be trouble and much fighting among the birds, for the English sparrows, when once they get in, are hard to get out. So the martins have been obliged to go to other places to nest.

For that reason I was surprised to find both species living in that city, and no fighting between them. The way they had settled it, as I soon saw, was by dividing the city between them;

that is, living at different heights in the air, almost as well separated as the upper and lower stories of a house.

The English sparrows lived in the lower story. They had their nests in vines on the houses, and over the doors and windows and such places, and they got their food and spent their time on the ground and low trees. They rarely flew higher than the trees and the telegraph wires.

The purple martins lived in the upper story. They gathered their food of flying insects in the air, high up above the buildings, and alighted only on the tops of the tall business blocks and on the highest wires. I never saw one go lower. In that way each tribe of birds had its own level, and did not interfere with the other.

The place the martins had selected for their homes was most curious and interesting. The business block about which I saw them had a flat roof, and the front brick wall ended in a square top. For ornament, or to protect the wall from rain, a terra-cotta covering, a half-cylinder in shape, was placed over this square top ; that is, as if a stove-pipe or a tile used for drains were cut in half for its whole length. This made a low sort of arch over the brick wall, which was open at the end.

Under this arch, perhaps five or six inches in

the highest part, the martins had made their nests. Here they were to be seen from morning till night, sitting in the doorway and going in and out, very much at home. Of course all of them had to go in at the same entrance, and there were a large number who seemed to live there.

Whenever I looked out of my windows, I could see the beautiful dark blue martins circling about over the tall buildings and calling in their sweet voices, apparently unconscious of what was going on in the busy streets, and the sparrows chirping and squawking down below in their noisy fashion.

Purple martins are beautiful birds and are fond of living near people, but they will not build nests in trees like robins. They prefer comfortable martin houses; and in the spring, when they come north for the summer, if they find their houses occupied, they will not stay. Mrs. Celia Thaxter, who was very fond of birds, had a hundred martin houses put up on the island where she lived, and the birds liked them so well that the first year a hundred pairs of martins settled there for the season.

THE LOST BABY

One lovely June evening, a few years ago, I was walking on a lonely road away up in the Green Mountains, where they run nearly to the top of the map in the State of Vermont.

I was engaged in my usual summer occupation of watching and studying birds, and my desire that evening was to hear the twilight hymn of a certain hermit thrush who sang from the thick woods beside the road. For some reason the bird was not singing, and I wandered on and on, not liking to give him up, till it began to grow dark and I found myself much farther than usual from the farmhouse where I was staying.

I was about turning to go back, when suddenly a strange, loud cry burst into the silence. It was unlike anything I had ever heard. No bird, I thought, could utter such a sound, and I did not care to meet any wild beast from the woods, especially as I had already heard very strange voices from that quarter. At that moment I noticed a robin perched on a tall post a little farther up the road, looking over with great inter-

est at something on the ground, and when the cry was repeated, I saw that it came from that spot.

The bird's evident curiosity aroused mine, and I determined to see what it was. Slowly I walked on towards it, the cries sounding louder, with a rustling among the weeds that showed me where the creature — whatever it was — was moving.

As I came nearer, the hopping and thrashing about increased, and the weeds moved violently. I caught sight of a queer-looking creature, more like a big toad than anything I could think of, leaping or jumping along beside the road.

I tried to take him in my hands, but he uttered louder and more frantic cries, and scrambled under a thick patch of low bushes that bordered the way. I followed, — not under, but over the bushes, — for now I began to think it might be a young bird. But as I parted the branches over him, he slipped farther on, till he passed through and came out into the open the other side.

On coming near him, I heard from the woods a low, rapid tapping, which I thought was made by a woodpecker. And knowing that one of the largest of the family, whom I had never seen, lived in that neighborhood, I was more than ever determined to see the youngster, — probably, I thought, a woodpecker baby.

When he appeared outside, therefore, I pounced upon him, and took him up in my hands. He was not a gentle captive. He struggled and tried to bite me, and as my hands closed over him, he uttered a wail more despairing than any before.

On the instant, as if in reply, there came a shriek from the darkening woods that would have startled me greatly if I had not at once recognized that it was the agonized cry of the mother of the infant I held, for of course it was a young bird I found in my hands.

Unfortunately for the student, bird babies look a good deal alike, so, as the easiest way to name my prize, I glanced up at the distressed mother. She had come into plain sight, forgetting her own danger in her anxiety and terror, and no doubt thinking it was now all over with her precious offspring.

I looked for a woodpecker, but I saw a cuckoo, and knew I was looking, for the first time, on a full-grown young cuckoo.

I did not study him closely, for between his own struggles and his mother's painful cries, I could not bear to hold him long. In a minute I opened my hands, and away he went, half flying, half hopping up the road after his mother. She had instantly, upon his release, slipped back among the trees out of sight, and resumed the

tapping sound, which I then found was a modification of the "Kuk! Kuk! Kuk!" of the family. It was her talk to her little one.

It was the first time I had seen a young cuckoo just out of the nest, but the very young nestling is the oddest baby I ever saw. It is about as big as the end of my thumb, black as ink, and stuck all over with tiny white quills that look like pins on a black cushion. It does not look as if it could ever grow to be as big as its mother.

You have heard or read, perhaps, that the cuckoo does not make a nest, but puts her eggs into the nests of other birds, leaving them to hatch and rear her youngsters. This is true of the cuckoo of Europe, but remember always that our cuckoos make nests and bring up their own young, and are just as tender and careful of them as any bird I know.

It is true that a few cases have been reported of eggs found in other birds' nests, but so far as I have heard, these cases were not positively proved. Moreover, even if true, it happens so seldom that it does not affect the general rule.

HOW THE CROW BABY WAS PUNISHED

I ONCE watched the doings in a crow nursery. The babies were out of the nest, and came with their mothers to a pasture away from most of the houses, and quite near the woods where their home had been.

There was, to be sure, a low cottage next to the fence, which the birds did not seem to notice. It was a farmhouse, with doors and windows nearly all on the other side, so that the people were not often seen next the pasture, and there were no children to run about and be noisy.

I was staying in that farmhouse to study the birds, and one of my windows looked into the pasture. I was very careful never to let the birds see me at the window, and so I had a fine chance to see how a crow mamma brings up her family.

The big-little ones were about the size of the grown-ups, but they had funny little dumpy tails, and were clumsy in getting about. Their cry sounded just like a human baby cry, "Ma-a-a! Ma-a-a!" It was very droll, and I watched them with great interest.

The most important thing the elders had to do was to teach the youngsters how to fly, and every little while one or both of the parents would fly round the pasture, giving a peculiar call as they went. This call appeared to be an order to the little folk to follow, for all would start up and circle round for a minute or two, and then drop back to the fence or the ground to rest.

Once, while I was watching them, this cry was given, and all flew as usual except one bob-tailed baby, who stood on a big stone in the middle of the field. He was perhaps so comfortable he did not want to go, or it may be he was afraid and thought mamma would not notice him.

But mothers' eyes are sharp, and she did see him. She knew, too, that baby crows must learn to fly, so when they all came down again she flew right at the naughty bird, and knocked him off his perch. He squawked, and fluttered his wings to keep from falling, but the blow came so suddenly that he had not time to save himself, and he fell flat on the ground.

In a minute he clambered back upon his stone, and I watched him closely. The next time the call came to fly he did not linger, but went with the rest, and so long as I could watch him he never disobeyed again.

A JAY'S TABLE MANNERS

The Canada jay is a bird who lives in the northern part of the United States, in the solitary woods or near them, and is closely related to our jolly blue jay. He seems to be as full of fun and antics as his cousin in blue, and many stories, some true and some untrue, are told about him.

Wood-cutters and hunters who camp out in these mountains and woods call him "camp bird" and other such names, because he is fond of coming about a camp and making himself free with their property. He carries off their meat, and helps himself to anything he wants.

The campers forget that they have intruded into his home, where he feels that everything belongs to him. Some men are fair-minded enough to see this, even some of the Indians who live up there near the birds. One of them told a lady who traveled in that part of the country that the woods belonged to the bird. It was his home, and men had no right there; in fact, they were intruders. When men appeared

on his ground, and the bird came to see what they were about, they called him impertinent, while the truth was, the men were the impertinent ones.

The Indian name for this bird is something like "Wiscachon," and he has come to be called by white men "Whiskey John" and "Whiskey Jack."

He is a beautiful bird in soft gray plumage, and one of the most intelligent of the family. All the jays are interesting, and know more, it is thought, than any other birds. Travelers generally tell the troublesome and funny things they do, but Dr. Merriam, who has known birds all his life, has told a little story that shows him in a new light, in pleasant relations with his fellows.

The doctor says that it was his habit when camping out to give the birds what was left of his meals, and among the rest of the fragments were often a few pancakes, a favorite dish in the woods.

The way the cakes were served to the jays was by thrusting a sharp stick through one and pinning it to the ground, so that it could not be carried off. Then the jays, who are not much afraid of men, would come around to get the dainty, which they like as well as some other little folk do.

Although there might be a half-dozen birds, all anxious for the cake, they never once quarreled over it. One would go up and pull off a piece, then another would follow, and so on, each one taking his turn and waiting for his brother to pull off his bit before he went up himself.

Were not those pretty good table manners for a bird brought up in the woods?

FRIENDLY WILD ROBINS

When wild birds find that the people about them are always kind and never trouble them, they often get very tame. I have known of several cases of robins so tame that they did not at all fear the family near whom they lived.

I have told in another book about a pair of robins who nested in one yard for fourteen years. If they were not the same pair all the time, they were descendants of one pair, for they came every spring to the same old places, just as tame and fearless as they had been when they left them in the fall — fearless of the family, I mean. They were as shy of strangers as any robins, but any one of the family could look at a nest or pick up a young robin without frightening the birds.

One day there arose a great hue and cry on the lawn, and some one from the house went out to see what was the matter. All the robins of the neighborhood were flying about, scolding and crying at the top of their voices and circling round the head of a man who was walking quickly away.

It seems he had picked up a young robin just out of the nest, and the parents had called in their neighbors to help rescue it. The lady, who saw what was the trouble, went to the man and claimed the youngster as a "tame bird." The man gave it to her, and in an instant the cries ceased. Not only the parents knew the little one was safe in her hands, but all the other birds seemed to understand it also. She carried the baby bird back to the lawn and put him in a safe place, while the elders looked on perfectly satisfied.

I know of another young robin picked up from the ground when he was just out of the nest, to save him from cats. He was not caged, but allowed to go all over the house, and out of doors.

When his kind mistress thought he was old enough to take care of himself and keep out of the way of cats, she tried to give him his liberty. Again and again she carried him out of doors away from the house and left him, but he would not be left. He would stand on a branch and shriek and call like a lost child, till she came back. Then he would fly to her shoulder, rub his head against her cheek, and give sweet little notes, showing his love for her, and his delight at getting back to her.

Another lady, who nursed a little robin that was hurt, had the same experience. The bird was so happy with her that he would not leave her. She told me she had sometimes set him on her hat and walked about the streets and into shops with her live-bird ornament, and he never thought of leaving her.

She often took her pet into a grove and let him fly about wherever he chose. He liked it very much, but the minute she started up to leave him, he flew to her. He would not be left.

I could tell you other stories to show that when birds are well treated and made happy with people, they get much attached to them, and often prefer to stay with them. But they must be well fed, kindly treated, allowed a good deal of liberty, and above all — never teased.

A lady told me a funny story about a robin. He was brought up in the house from the nest, and never learned to sing the robin song, for he had not heard it. He plainly tried to make some sort of music, and one of the family taught him to whistle "Yankee Doodle." He whistled it perfectly, and never tried to sing anything else.

Once this Yankee Doodle robin got out of the house and flew up into a tree. When the wild birds came about him he entertained them by

whistling his favorite air, which sent the birds off in a panic.

Robins have been known to imitate words. One that I know of lived in the house with a parrot who talked, and learned from him to say "Aunt Maria" as plainly as the parrot himself.

THE DROLL MOCKINGBIRD

The more I see of the mockingbird, the more sure I am that he plays many of his pranks for pure fun.

When he lives in a cage and learns to mock the sounds he hears about him, such as the postman's whistle, the call to the dog, or the chicken's cry of distress, he delights to give these sounds by way of a joke, — for instance, the cry of a chicken in the night, when it will send some kind-hearted person out to the coop to see what is the matter, or the postman's whistle, to make some one run for letters.

A mockingbird that I once knew lived in a cage next door to a network partition which separated him from a large family of canaries. When first placed there, the bird seemed to be struck dumb by his neighbors' singing, while the truth was, he was simply studying his lesson. For days he remained silent, taking notes, learning their song; then suddenly, without any rehearsal so far as known, he burst out into the canary song, in a loud, ringing tone that struck every little yellow throat dumb for a time.

After this it was his pleasure to keep silent till half the birds in the room were shrieking at the top of their voices, and then all at once to break into the concert with their own trills and quavers, so loudly given as to shut them all up in an instant. Then he stood and jerked his wings, and flirted his tail, and hopped gracefully back and forth in his big cage, evidently enjoying the consternation he had produced.

A curious thing I once saw was a free mockingbird regarding the antics of a kitten at play on the grass. The bird took his position on a tree almost directly above pussy, leaned far over, jerked his tail, and uttered a peculiar sound like the "Fuff" of an excited cat. This is, in fact, the bird's war-cry, and for the little fellow to declare war upon the enemy of his race, when even in its infancy it was so much larger than himself, was very droll. His manner showed that he appreciated it, and enjoyed it as a joke.

On one occasion, when I was engaged in studying this bird in North Carolina, there happened to be something outside the fence that attracted the turkey buzzards, so numerous in that State. Many of them abandoned their usual occupation of soaring about in the air, and came one after another to earth, in plain sight.

Having never seen these birds much, I was

greatly interested in their movements, their gracefully decreasing circles, and as they neared the ground, their hanging legs, and their evident hesitation to alight. I had seen several come to the spot, and was wondering what could be there to attract them, when a mockingbird noticed the unusual gathering, flew down the yard, and perched upon the fence near where they were busily engaged in the road.

A few moments he stood looking at them intently, then suddenly, with a loud war-cry, dropped down among them. I was frightened, for they were big enough to eat him, but what was my amazement to see the buzzards rising in a panic, twenty of them. The mockingbird knew them better than I, and undoubtedly he did it as a joke, for the next minute he hopped gayly upon the fence, and began his loudest song, wriggling his body, and flirting his wings in a gleeful manner. At another time the joker became interested in the movements of a brood of chickens that with much noise and chatting accompanied their mamma about the yard. No doubt he planned another joke, for he quietly dropped from his perch into the midst of them.

A hen is a different bird from a buzzard, however, and the joke was not a success. The mother turned sharply upon the intruder, and he dis-

creetly left her and her family in peace. No triumphant song and no posturing on the fence followed this failure.

I have seen a mockingbird play a friendly trick upon another by suddenly hopping over his head and coming down on the other side, just avoiding touching him, but so barely missing that the victim always sprang to one side, or ducked his head.

I noticed, too, that the second bird watched his chance, and before long paid the joker in his own coin by jumping over *his* head when *he* did not expect it.

But life is not all fun even to a mockingbird. Here is a little story of one who was in trouble. The person who wrote me about it had found a young mockingbird in a nest in a low thorn-bush. It was about ready to fly, and thinking he would secure it for his young sister, he went to the house for a cage. "All the time we were at the nest," he says, "the mother bird was giving her cry of distress, and continually darting down at us, as though to fight. As soon as we started back with the cage, she set up her cry, and when we were less than twenty yards from the nest, she flew down and pushed the young one out. As it fell, it made an effort to fly, and was carried ten or fifteen feet from the

bush. We rushed up to get it, when the old one flew down to the ground, and with either her claws or her bill carried it up to a height of ten or twelve feet, then let it go, and flew, the young one making an effort to follow her. This it did, till it gave out and fell, when the mother came down and lifted it again; and so she did, as we followed her up, for three or four times, till we were ashamed of ourselves and left them. I am satisfied," he concludes, "from her cries and action, that it was the mother's supreme effort to remove her young from danger."

The mockingbird is a great enemy of the cat, of course. All birds recognize the cat as an enemy that would like to eat them. Mockingbirds are known to drive cats off the premises, as I have told you swallows will do also.

Did you ever hear a mockingbird sing? and notice what funny words it seems to say? Those of you who live in the South of course have heard him often. The first time I ever heard one, I wrote down the words his song sounded like.

Here are some of them.

"Su-ky! su-ky! su-ky! come he-e-e-re! come he-e-e-re! malory! malory! malory! pe-de-de-de! quit! quit! qu! qu! qu! chick-a-pa-tee! chick-a-pa-tee! chick-a-pa-tee! pr-r-r-r! cup-o-tea! cup-o-tea! cup-o-tea! pic-o-lo! pic-o-lo! pic-o-lo!" So

he would go on an hour at a time, in a loud, clear voice, jerking his tail, lifting his wings, and turning his head to one side and the other, with bright black eyes fixed on me as if to see how I liked it.

I liked it very much indeed, and kept still and listened as long as he would sing.

A SOCIABLE BABY DOVE

Never were there more lovely and winning bird babies than young mourning doves. A dove's nest is a frail sort of platform that very soon drops to pieces, and the nestlings have to hold on to the branches for themselves. This would not do at all for restless babies — they would fall to the ground very soon; but young doves are quiet little fellows, with manners as composed as their mamma's. There are always two of them, and they sit side by side close together, saying nothing.

Some people think that mourning doves never say anything. They are very quiet, but they are not dumb. They utter soft, sweet notes, so very low that one has to be near them to hear at all.

The dove's nest is rarely very high, and in one place where I studied I often came upon them. There they would sit perfectly still and look at me calmly, as if they knew I would not touch them.

Sometimes the mother was there, just having

fed them, perhaps. She, too, sat perfectly still, in just the position in which I had caught her. If her head happened to be turned to one side, she would hold it there as if she were suddenly frozen stiff, and no matter how long I stayed, she would not move.

Besides their silence there is another queer thing about doves. When they fly they make a whistling sound that has been supposed by the wise men to be made in some way by the air among the wing feathers, and the dove song of "Coo-o!" with slight variations, was thought to be all he could sing.

All these strange things made the dove very interesting, and so one day when I came upon a young dove sitting on the lowest branch of a tree, I thought I would see if he could talk. I stopped six or eight feet from him, and began a low whistling call.

The bird instantly answered me, in a low but clear tone, and as long as I stood there and called, he answered. It seemed to make him uneasy, however, for he flew from one branch to another, though he did not go away.

The next day I found him there again, and again I began talking to him. He answered every time, with a sweet note, and sometimes he fluttered his wings a little, but it made him

restless again, and suddenly he flew directly toward me. It looked as if he were going to alight on my head, but he passed over a few inches above it, and alighted on a tree.

I turned and went on calling, when he flew to the ground almost at my feet, still answering me. Finally he flew back to the tree I found him on, and there I left him.

The sounds the dove baby made were so much like the whistling supposed to be made by wings that I thought I would find out more about it. So I went to a tree where doves spent a good deal of time, and hid myself under it. There I heard many notes, some of them like those made by the baby in answer to me, and some like their louder "Coo-o!" only very low. In fact, several days' study under the doves' tree taught me that they are as talkative as any birds, only they speak hardly above a whisper; and that they can make the whistling sound without flying, and can fly without making it at all. So there is still more to be found out about doves.

THE DUCKLINGS WHO WOULD NOT GIVE UP

PERHAPS you have heard the story of Bruce and the spider, how the tiny creature taught the man a lesson in patience and never giving up if he wanted to succeed in anything. Well, spiders are not the only creatures who,

> If at first they don't succeed,
> Try, try again.

A droll sight was that of a party of ducklings who evidently had that for their motto. They were not long out of the shell, and they started out one morning to have a swim. Unfortunately they chose the sea for their swimming-place, and set out bravely to wade in.

It happened to be when the tide was coming in, very quietly, with hardly a ripple. Every few moments a little wave not more than an inch or two high swept gently up on the beach, and then drew back into the ocean, after the manner of waves.

Now ducks, however young, are very dignified, and slowly and solemnly the little family party

waddled down toward the water. They were in no hurry. The sun was warm and pleasant; they had eaten their breakfast; they had the day before them.

Just as they reached the edge of the water, the tiny wavelet ran in, lifted the pretty yellow babies off their feet, swept them all far up on the beach, then turned, leaving them high and dry on the sand, and ran out to sea again.

The ducklings, not at all discouraged by this shabby joke of the wavelet, gathered themselves together and started again down the beach as bravely as before. Again the saucy wavelet came up to meet them, and again they were all set down far up on the beach.

One would think they might be discouraged. Far from it! They wanted to go into the water, and into the water they would go. A third time they set out for their swim, as earnest, as calm, as hopeful as at first. Of course they met the same fate as twice before, but of course they did not give it up.

Whether they ever really did get into the sea is not known. Eight or ten times, in fact as long as the observer had time and patience to watch them, the same game went on; each wavelet carried them all far up on the beach, and they all waddled back, with the single purpose of going into the sea for a swim.

Another of the duck tribe that I once saw lived with his mate in the yard with some hens, and did not approve of the loud cackling the hens make over every egg.

There was a little pond in the yard for the use of the ducks, and this knowing drake soon found out that the hens did not like to go into the water as ducks do. So whenever a hen came cackling out of the hen house, he would rush after her, seize her by the back of the neck, and drag her, squawking, fighting, and beating her wings, to the pond, where he would give her a good sousing, and then let her go.

The hens soon learned to expect it, and when one began to tell the world that there was a fresh egg in the box, she would go shrieking around the yard as fast as legs and wings could carry her, while the drake, with fury in his eye, scrambled after her.

BIRDS AND DOLLS

One day, when I had my Bird Room, I was dressing a doll for a young friend, and I laid it on my desk while I made the clothes.

Now on my desk I kept a small china box full of dried currants soaked soft, which the birds were very fond of. When a bird wanted one to eat, he would fly up on the desk and ask for one by looking at the box and then at me.

The first bird who came for a currant that morning was a thrush. The instant he saw the doll he was struck with panic, and flew madly, as if he feared the doll would eat him.

I laughed at him, for I thought he was simply a coward, but I soon found that every bird in the room was afraid of it. Some of them flew quietly but quickly away, while others scolded and squawked, and made a great noise over it. When I held the doll up so that all the birds in the room could see it, they made as much row as if the poor little doll were a big cat, used to eating birds.

I thought that was droll, but I found after-

wards that wild birds do not like dolls any better than captives. Once when I was watching the birds in a big yard full of trees, a little girl set her doll up on the ground, leaning against a tree, forgot it, and left it there.

The first birds who noticed it were a pair of blue jays who had a nest in the same yard. They came to the next tree and looked at it and talked softly together. Then they swooped down at it as if to see if they could scare it away, and finally they squawked at the poor doll and flew away.

Then two robins came to see what sort of a thing was there. They were evidently a good deal scared, but kept their courage up by shouting "He! he! he!" as they came near. One of them was determined to get near enough to see, and he came slowly nearer and nearer till about a foot from the doll, when he suddenly sprang up as if it had started for him, and both of them gave loud shrieks and flew away in a panic.

The next visitor to the bugaboo was a red-headed woodpecker. The minute he saw it he burst into a loud woodpecker chitter like "T-t-t-t-t!" growing louder and louder, and higher and higher, till it was almost a shriek, all the time with eyes fixed on the doll.

This strange performance excited all the birds

around, and many of them came to see what was the matter. When the woodpecker had said all he wanted to, he suddenly stopped, and the birds flew away as if the show were over. Not a bird dared to go very near the tree so long as it stayed there.

But the doll did not seem to mind it a bit.